PARENTAL ADVISORY
EXPLICIT
CONTENT

Blue [illegible] g

Story and Art by Shoko Hidaka

volume 4

PARENTAL ADVISORY
EXPLICIT
CONTENT

Blue[redacted]g

Story and Art by **Shoko Hidaka**

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PARENTAL ADVISORY
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Blue[redacted]g

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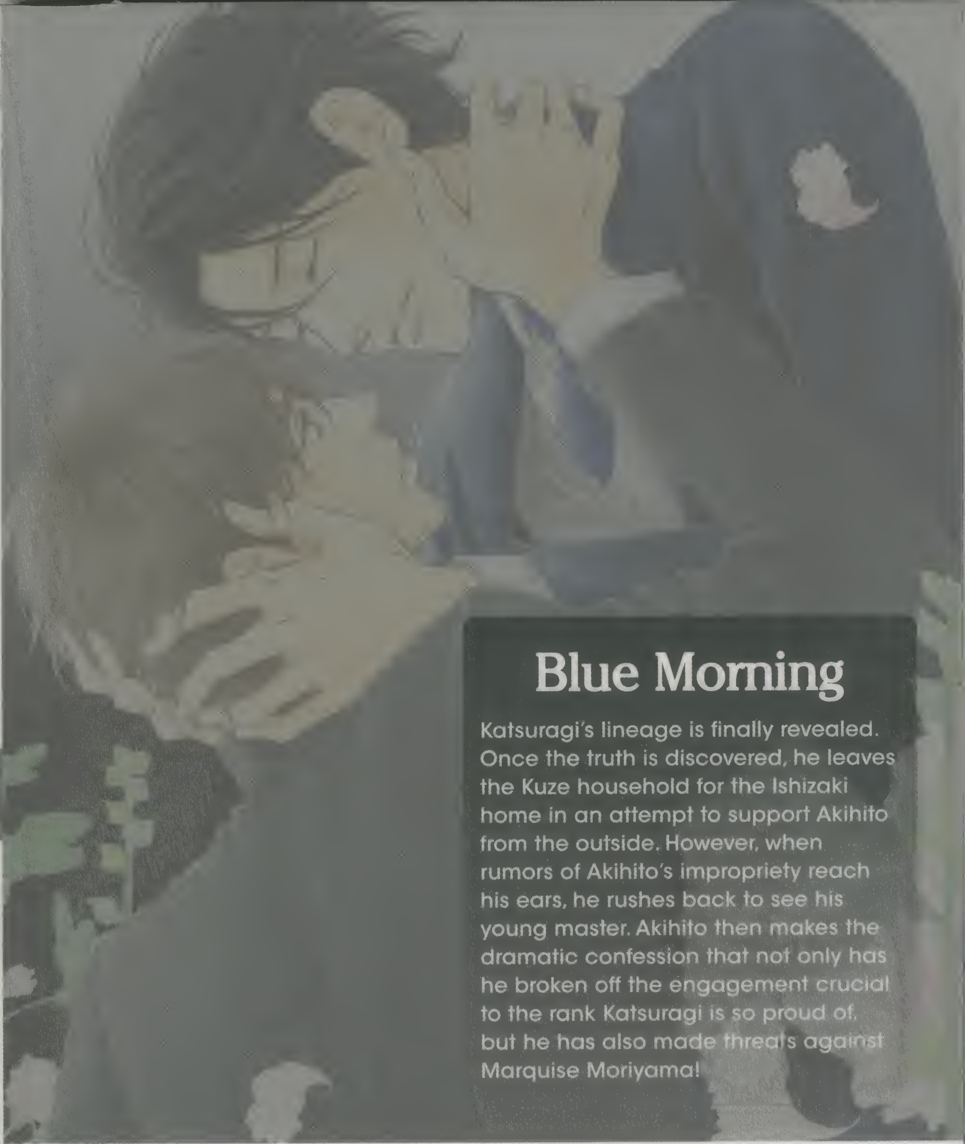
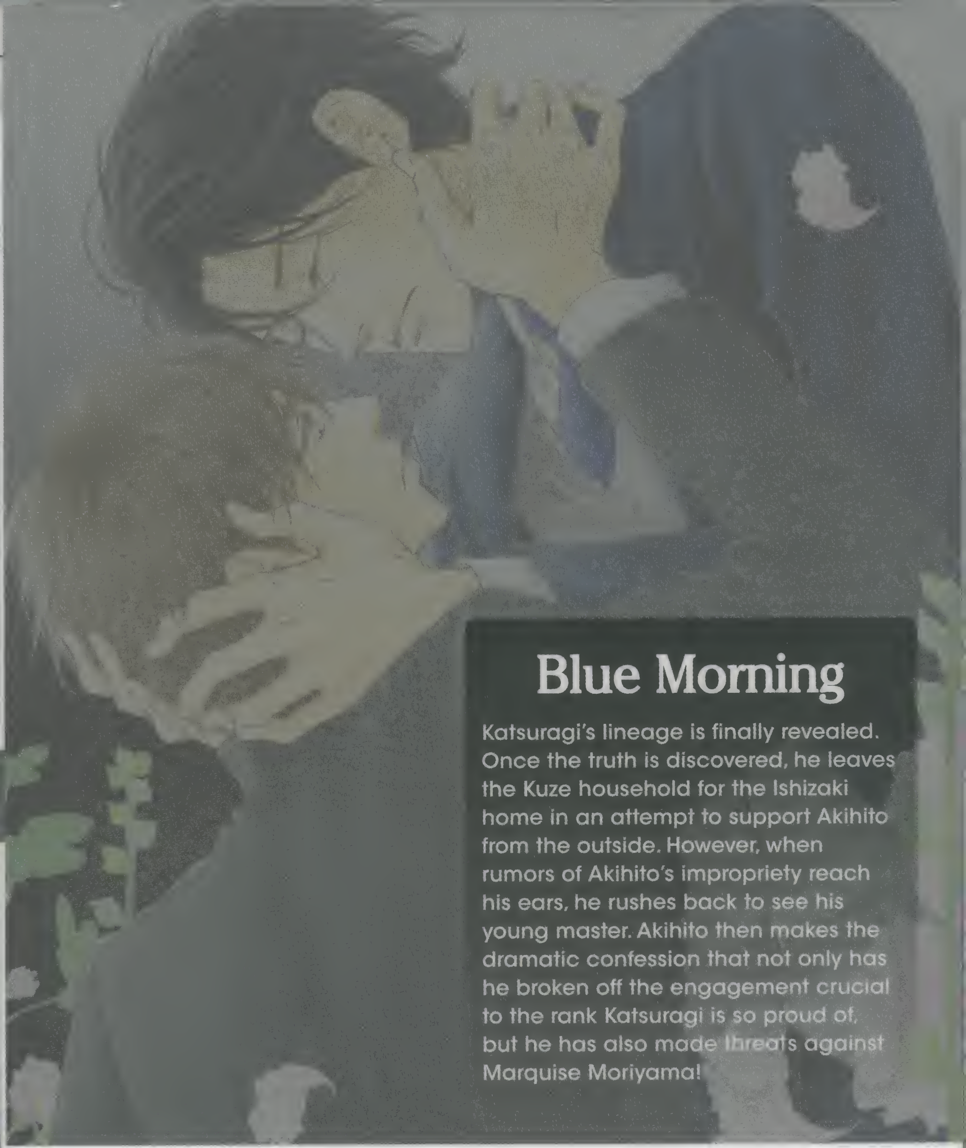


Blue Morning

Katsuragi's lineage is finally revealed. Once the truth is discovered, he leaves the Kuze household for the Ishizaki home in an attempt to support Akihito from the outside. However, when rumors of Akihito's impropriety reach his ears, he rushes back to see his young master. Akihito then makes the dramatic confession that not only has he broken off the engagement crucial to the rank Katsuragi is so proud of, but he has also made threats against Marquise Moriyama!



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Blue Morning

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volume 4

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SUBLIME

SuBLime Manga Edition

Blue Morning

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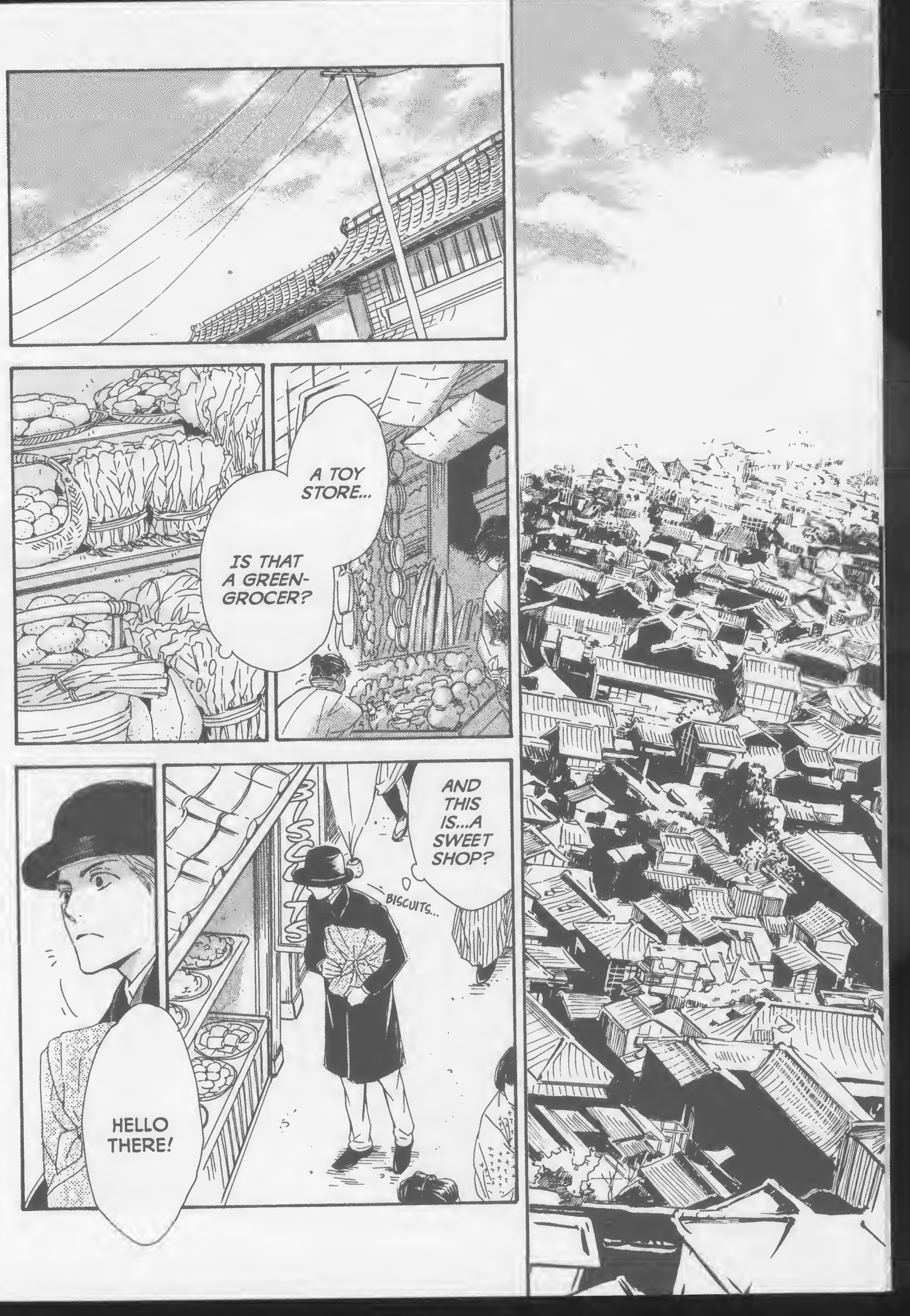
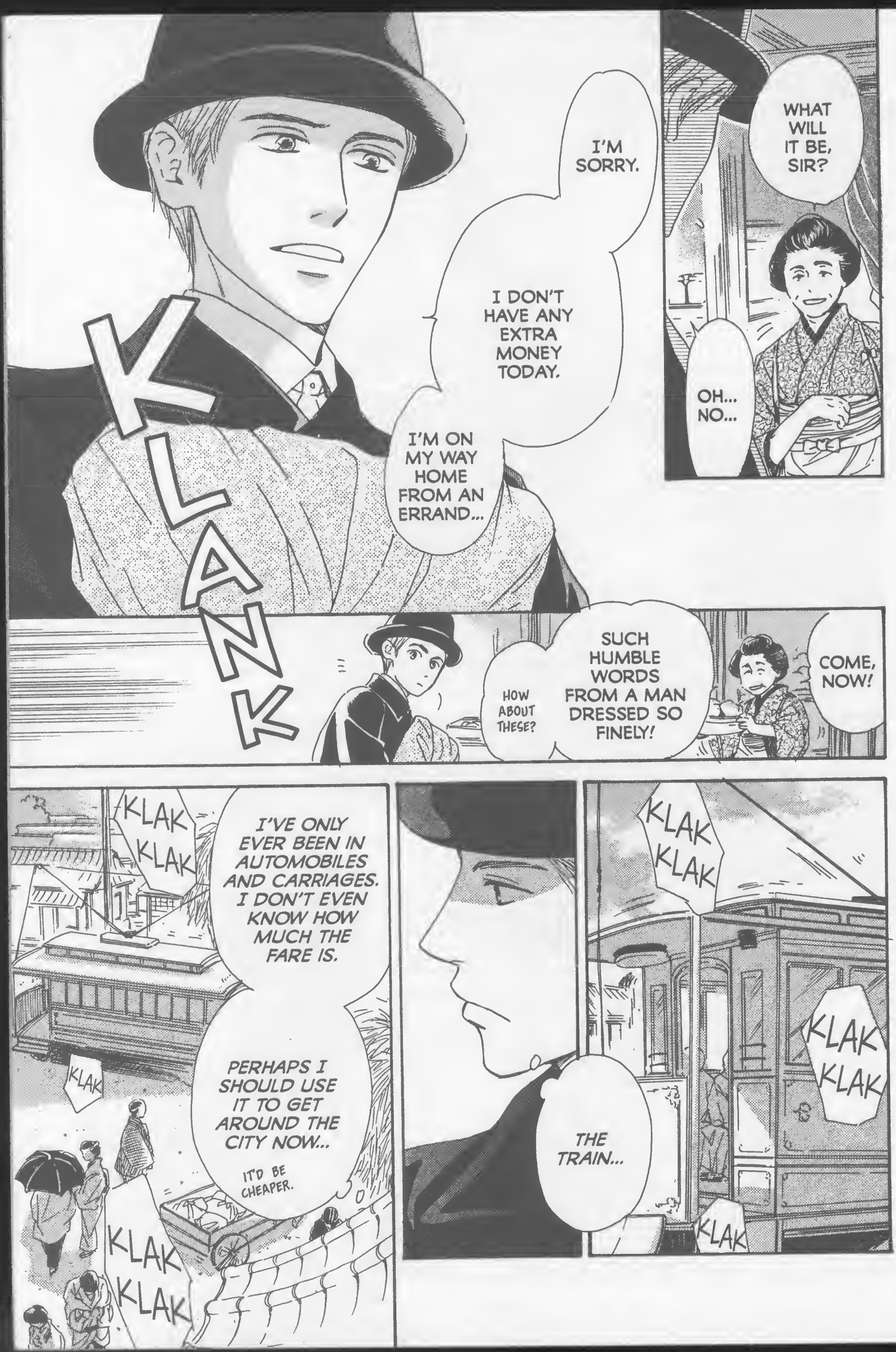
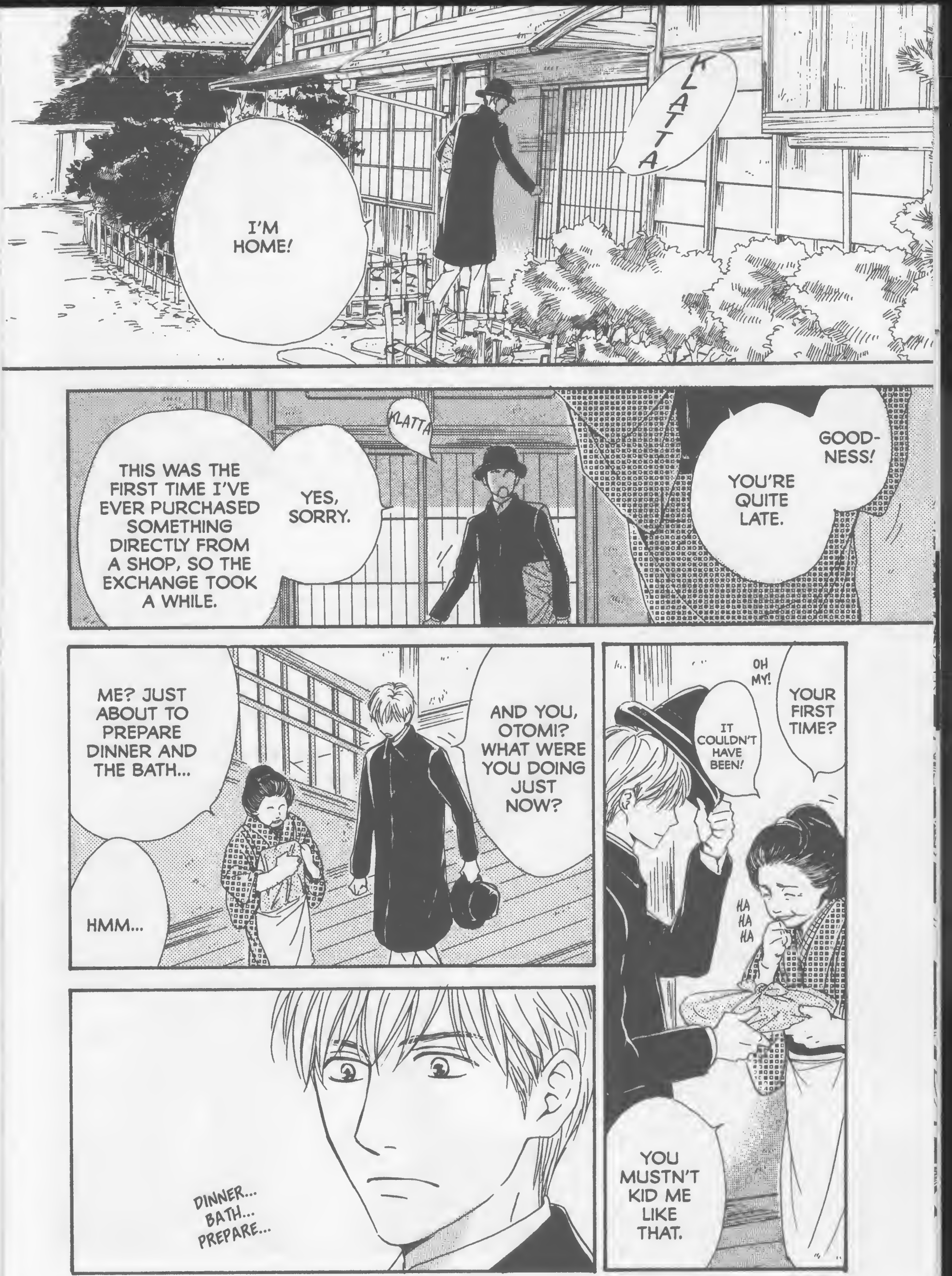
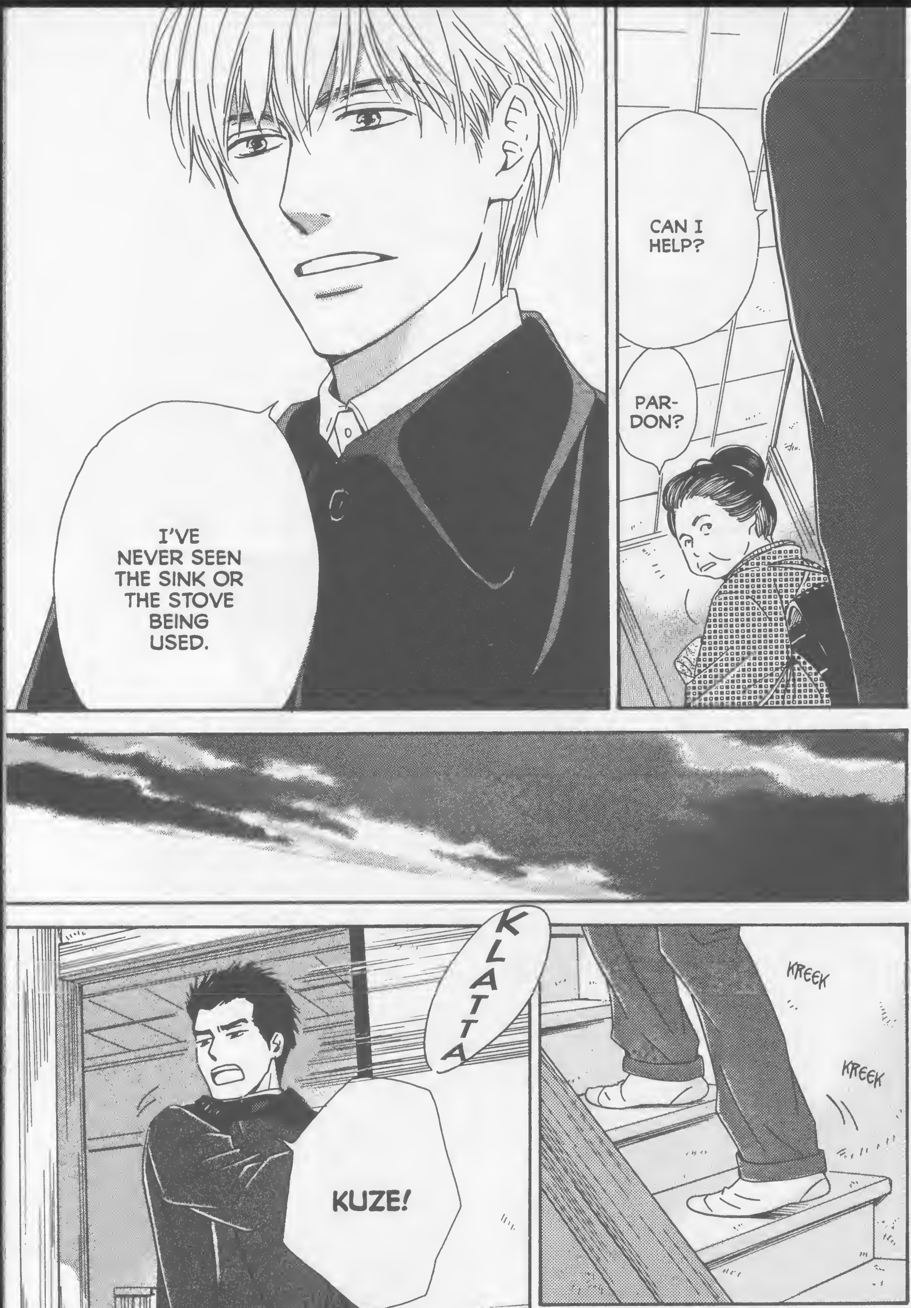
Blue Morning: Scene 16

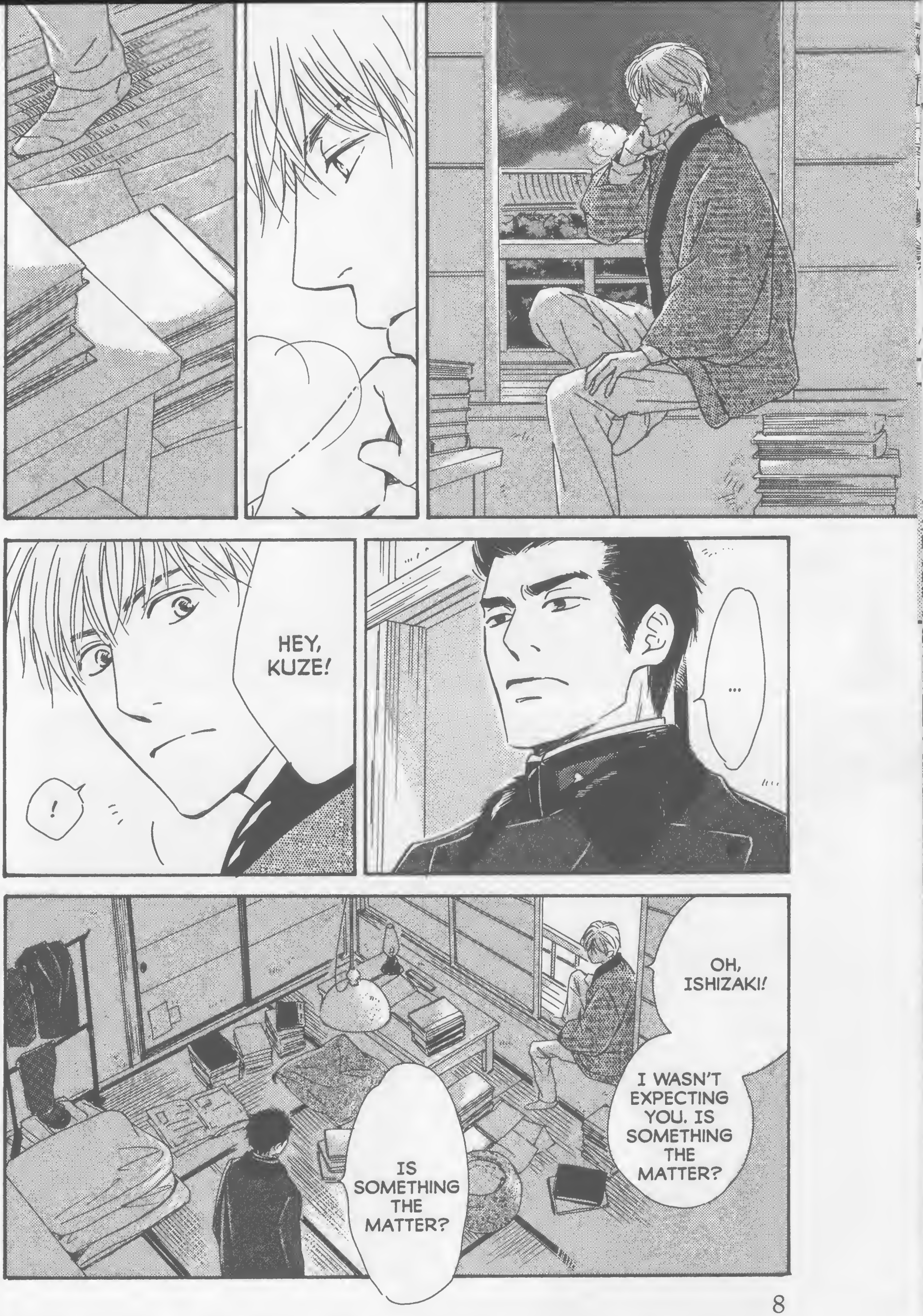
憂鬱な朝
scene 16

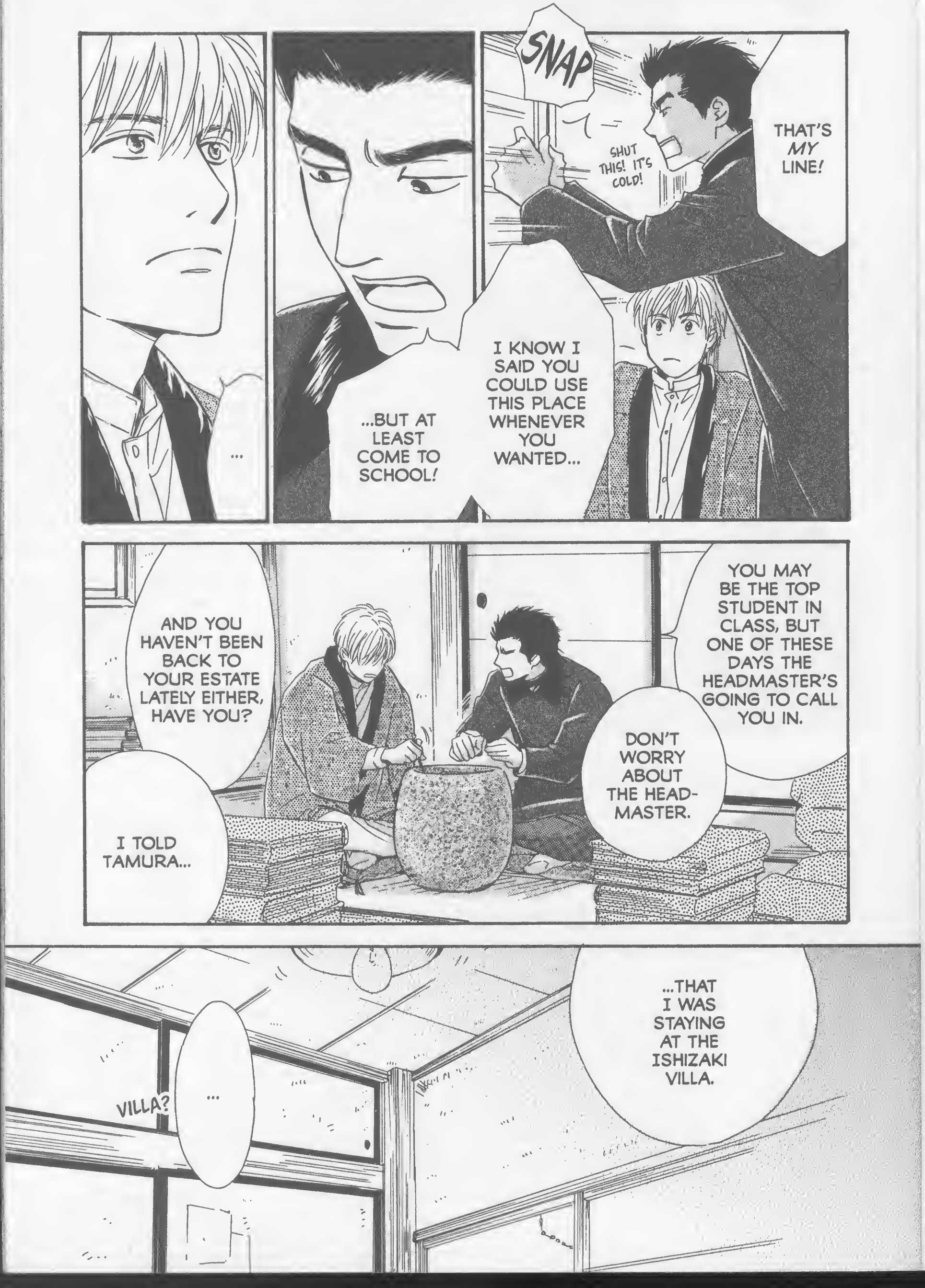

A TOY STORE...
IS THAT A GREEN-GROCER?
AND THIS IS...A SWEET SHOP?
BISCUITS...
HELLO THERE!

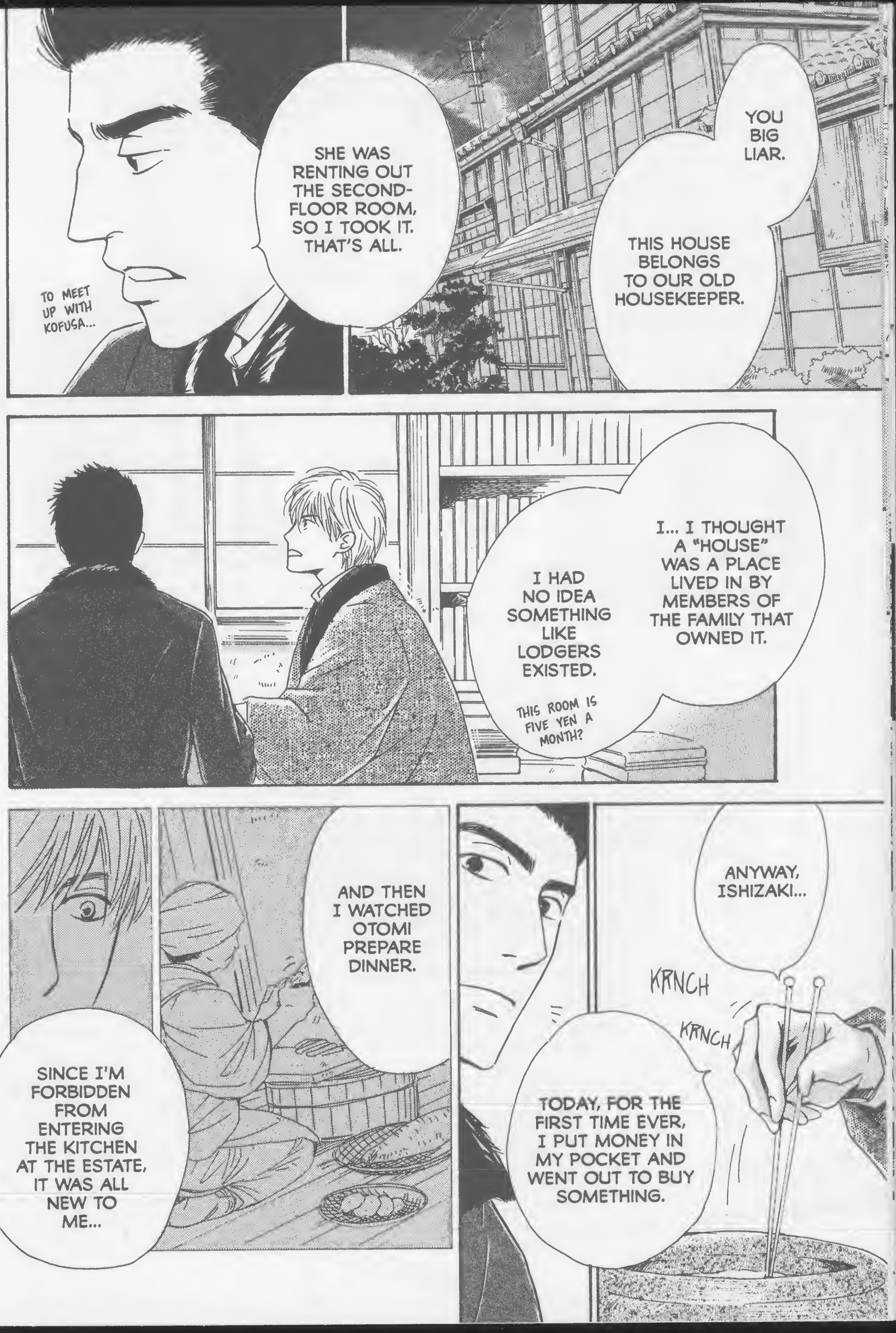

WHAT WILL IT BE, SIR?
OH... NO...
I'M SORRY.
I DON'T HAVE ANY EXTRA MONEY TODAY.
I'M ON MY WAY HOME FROM AN ERRAND...
KLANK
COME, NOW!
SUCH HUMBLE WORDS FROM A MAN DRESSED SO FINELY!
HOW ABOUT THESE?
KLAK KLAK
KLAK KLAK
KLAK
THE TRAIN...
KLAK KLAK
I'VE ONLY EVER BEEN IN AUTOMOBILES AND CARRIAGES. I DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW MUCH THE FARE IS.
PERHAPS I SHOULD USE IT TO GET AROUND THE CITY NOW...
IT'D BE CHEAPER.
KLAK
KLAK KLAK

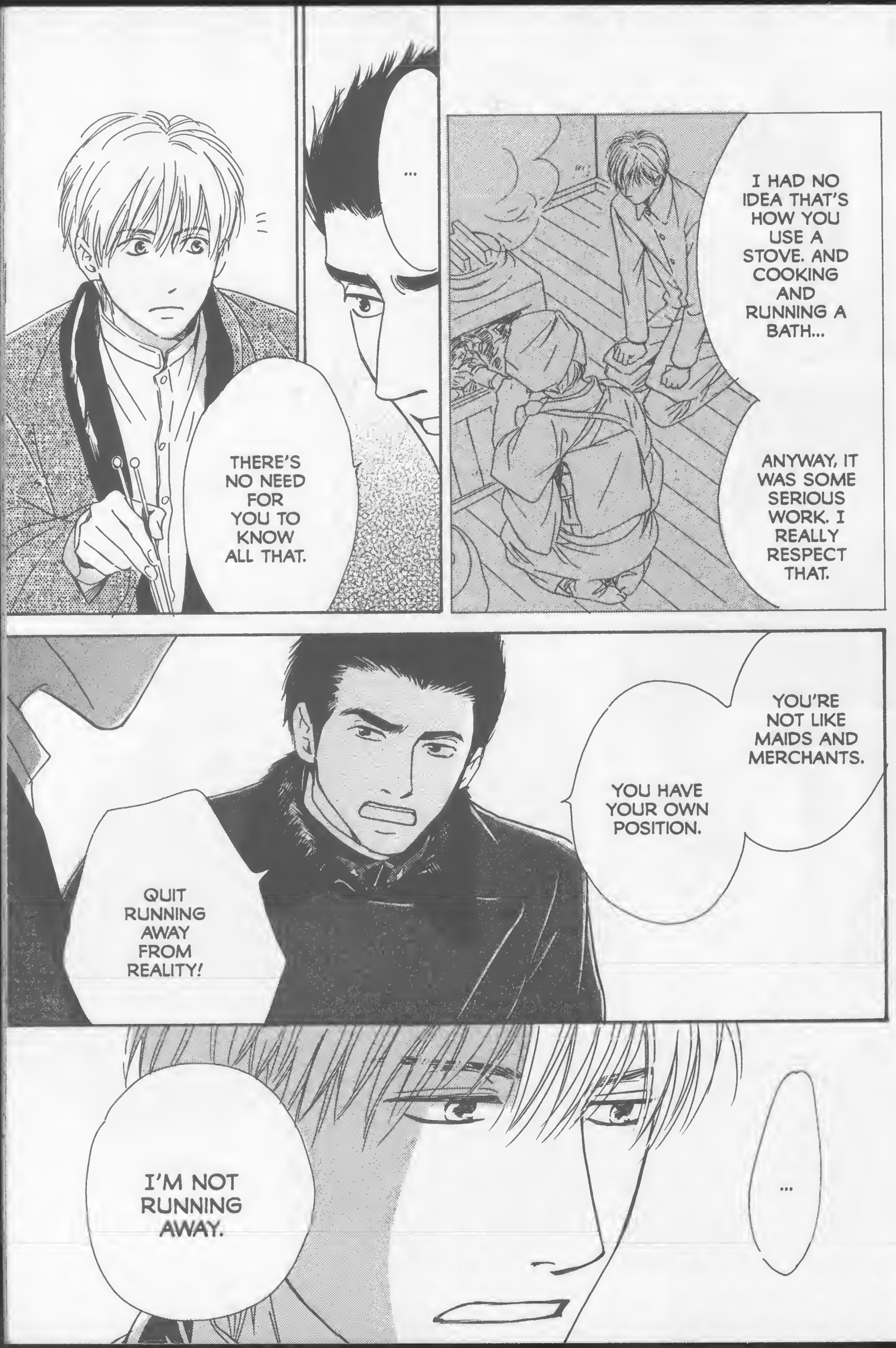

KLATTA
I'M HOME!
GOODNESS!
YOU'RE QUITE LATE.
KLATTA
YES, SORRY.
THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME I'VE EVER PURCHASED SOMETHING DIRECTLY FROM A SHOP, SO THE EXCHANGE TOOK A WHILE.
YOUR FIRST TIME?
OH MY!
IT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN!
HA HA HA
YOU MUSTN'T KID ME LIKE THAT.
AND YOU, OTOMI? WHAT WERE YOU DOING JUST NOW?
ME? JUST ABOUT TO PREPARE DINNER AND THE BATH...
HMM...
DINNER... BATH... PREPARE...

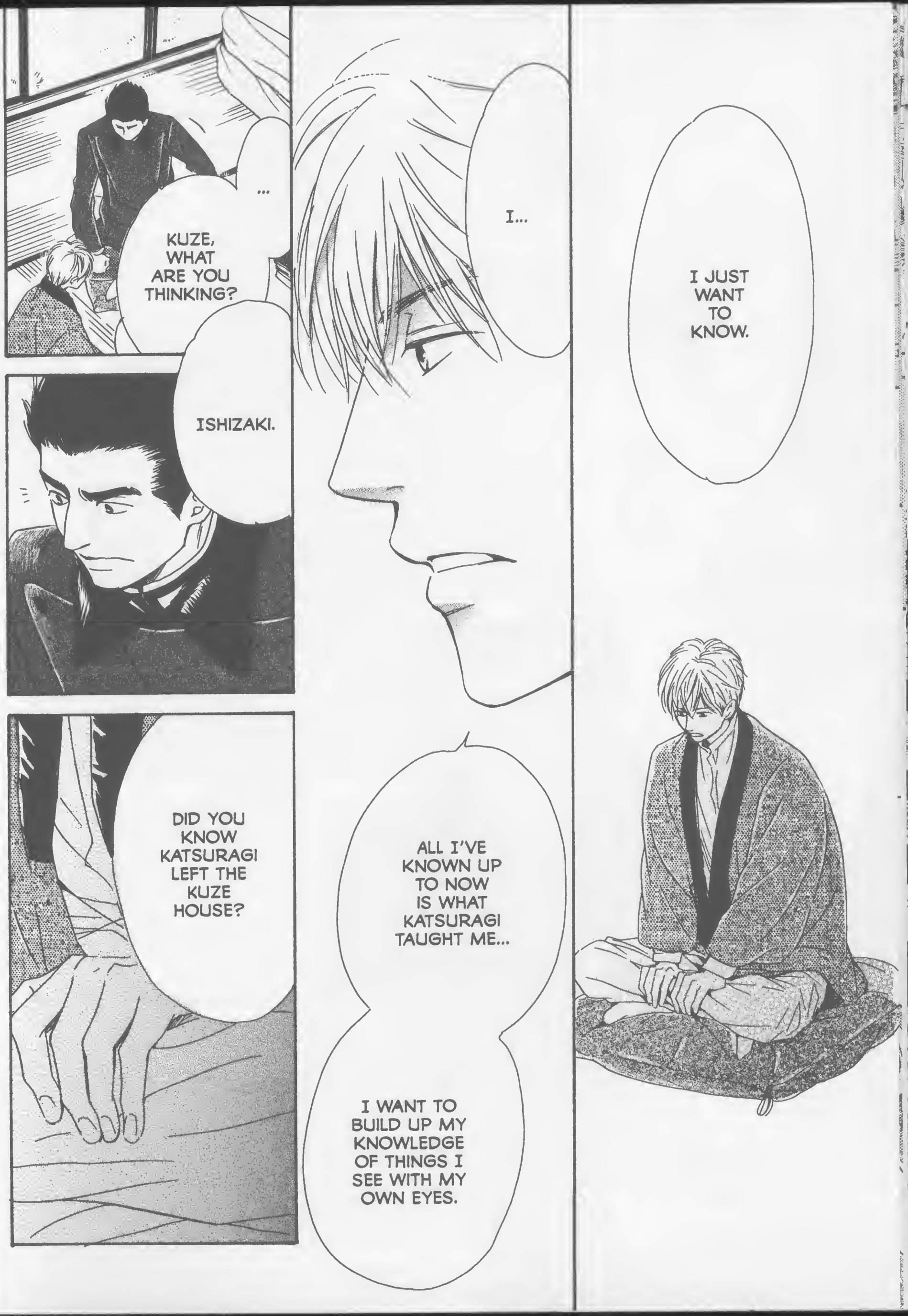

CAN I HELP?
PARDON?
I'VE NEVER SEEN THE SINK OR THE STOVE BEING USED.
KREEK
KREEK
KLATTA
KUZE!

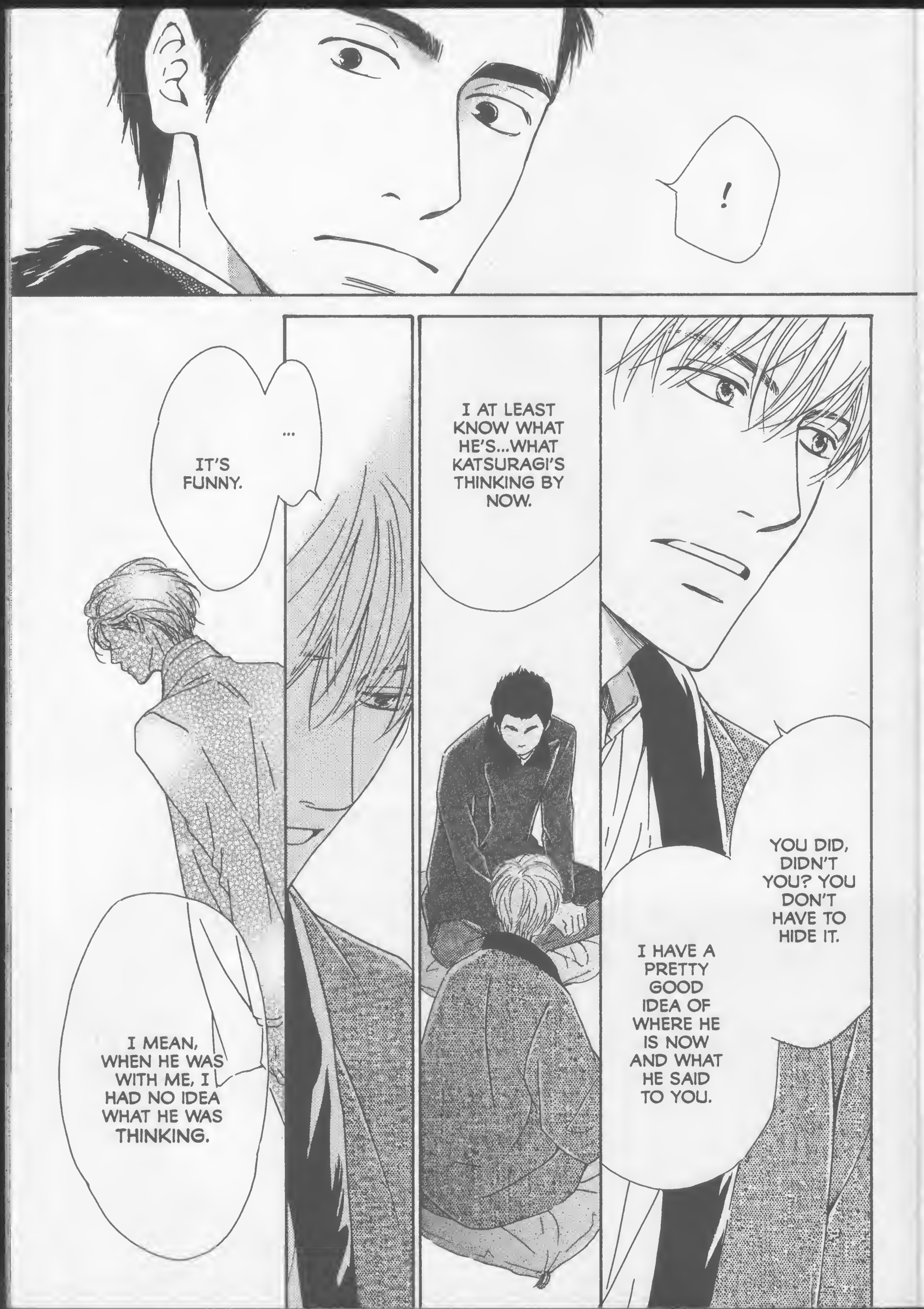

...
HEY, KUZE!
!
OH, ISHIZAKI!
I WASN'T EXPECTING YOU. IS SOMETHING THE MATTER?
IS SOMETHING THE MATTER?

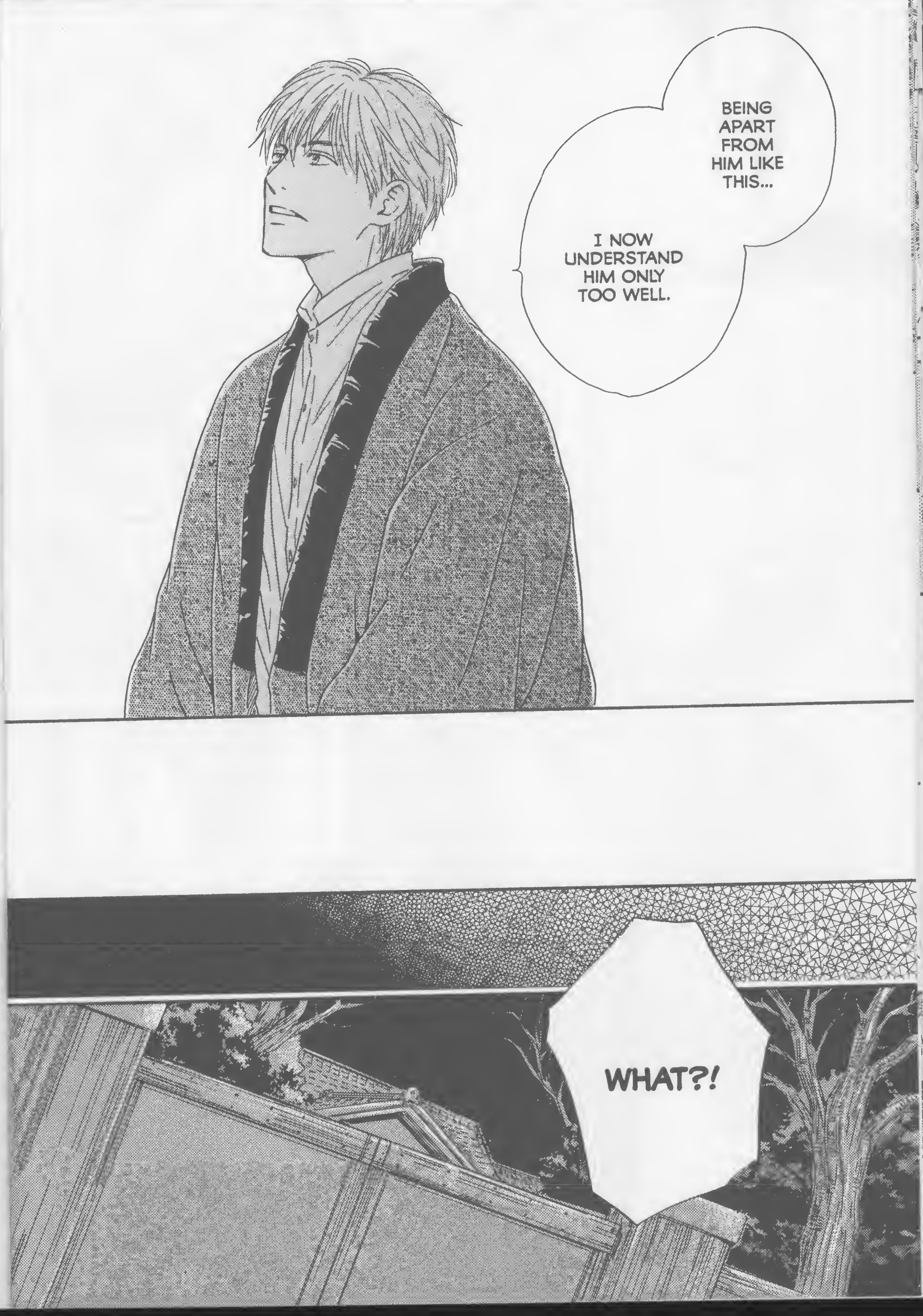

THAT'S *MY* LINE!
SNAP
SHUT THIS! IT'S COLD!
I KNOW I SAID YOU COULD USE THIS PLACE WHENEVER YOU WANTED...
...BUT AT LEAST COME TO SCHOOL!
...
YOU MAY BE THE TOP STUDENT IN CLASS, BUT ONE OF THESE DAYS THE HEADMASTER'S GOING TO CALL YOU IN.
AND YOU HAVEN'T BEEN BACK TO YOUR ESTATE LATELY EITHER, HAVE YOU?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE HEADMASTER.
I TOLD TAMURA...
...THAT I WAS STAYING AT THE ISHIZAKI VILLA.
...
VILLA?

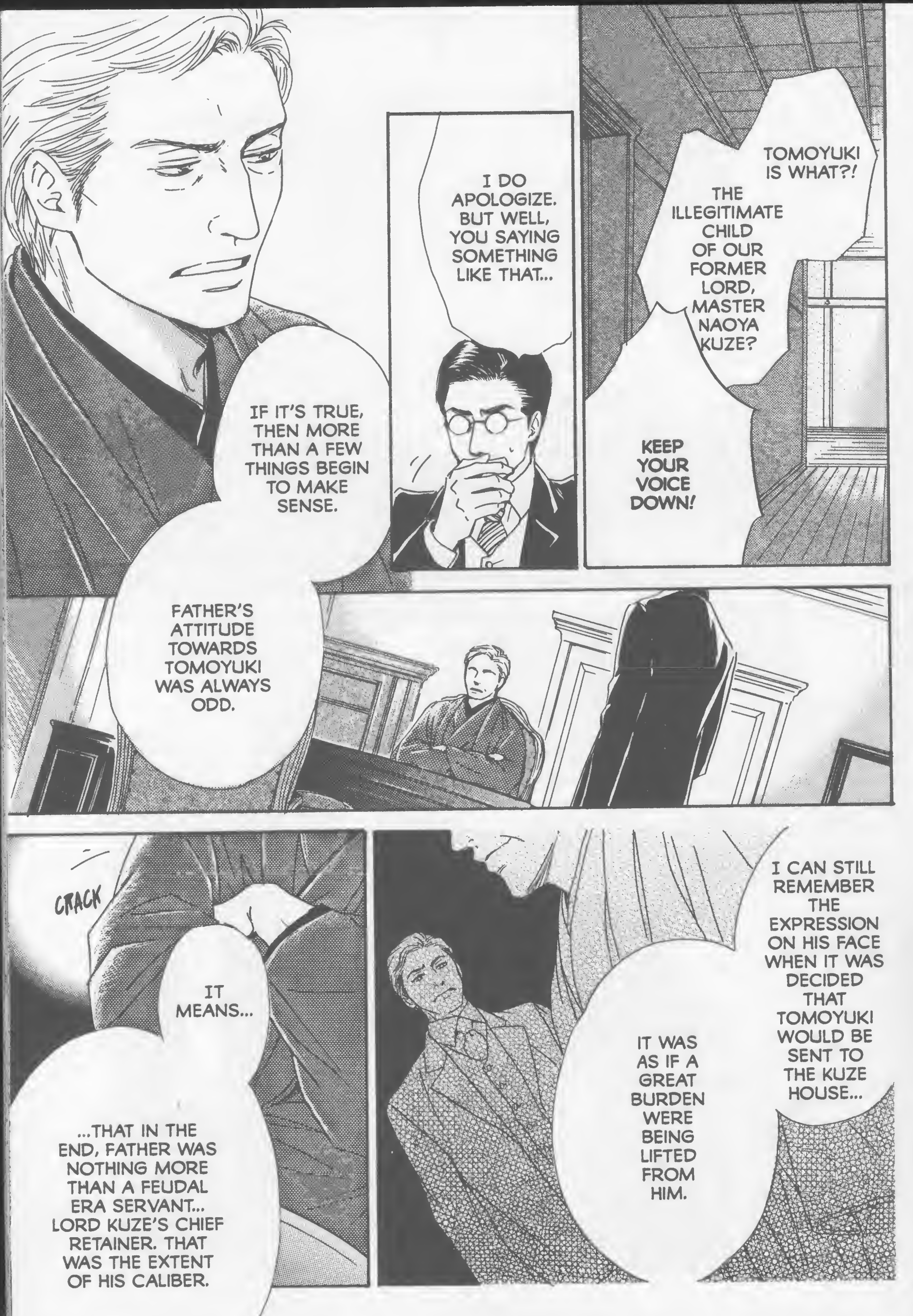

YOU BIG LIAR.
THIS HOUSE BELONGS TO OUR OLD HOUSEKEEPER.
SHE WAS RENTING OUT THE SECOND-FLOOR ROOM, SO I TOOK IT. THAT'S ALL.
TO MEET UP WITH KOFUSA...
I... I THOUGHT A "HOUSE" WAS A PLACE LIVED IN BY MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY THAT OWNED IT.
I HAD NO IDEA SOMETHING LIKE LODGERS EXISTED.
THIS ROOM IS FIVE YEN A MONTH?
ANYWAY, ISHIZAKI...
KRNCH
KRNCH
TODAY, FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER, I PUT MONEY IN MY POCKET AND WENT OUT TO BUY SOMETHING.
AND THEN I WATCHED OTOMI PREPARE DINNER.
SINCE I'M FORBIDDEN FROM ENTERING THE KITCHEN AT THE ESTATE, IT WAS ALL NEW TO ME...

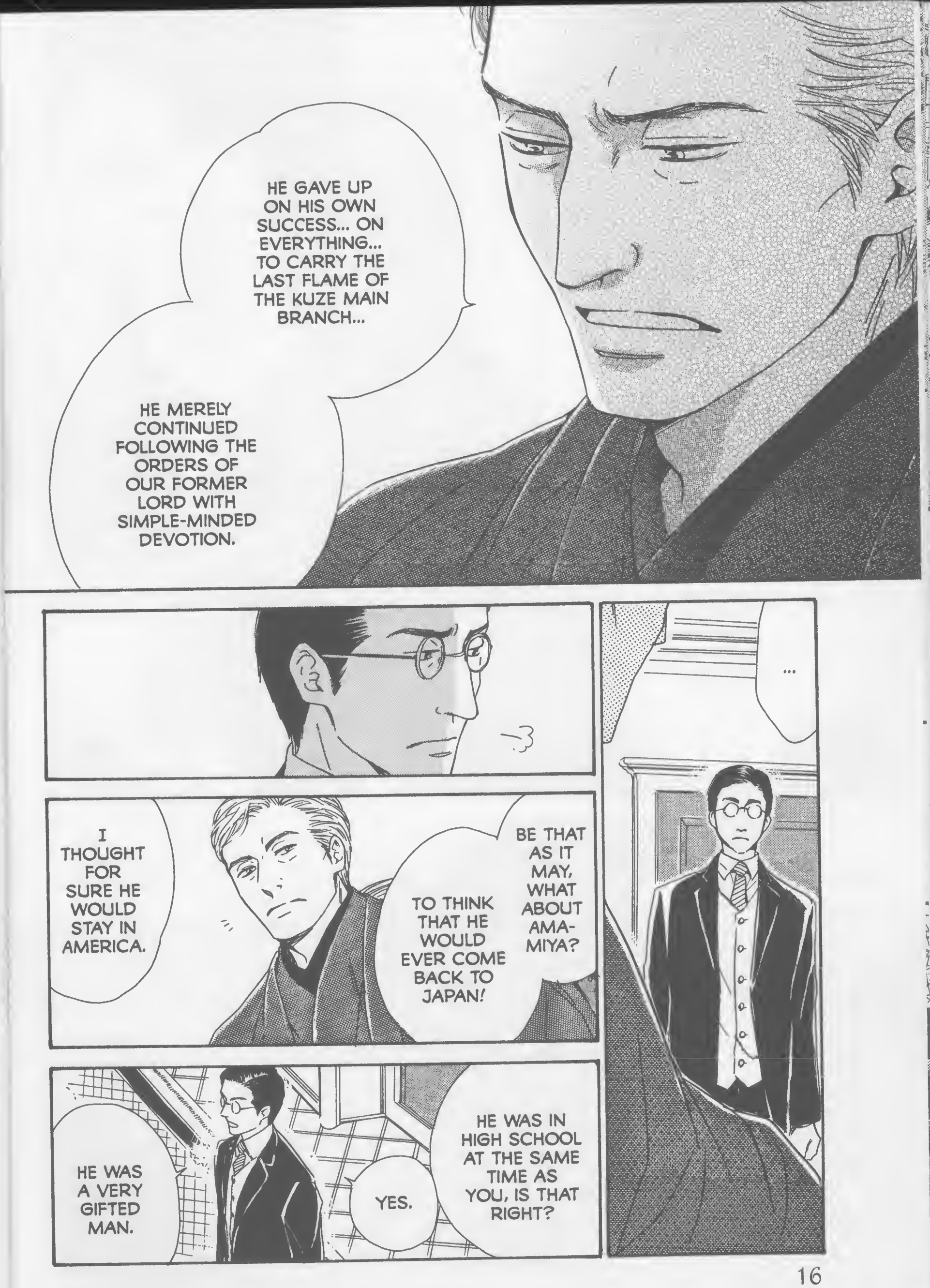

I HAD NO IDEA THAT'S HOW YOU USE A STOVE. AND COOKING AND RUNNING A BATH...
ANYWAY, IT WAS SOME SERIOUS WORK. I REALLY RESPECT THAT.
...
THERE'S NO NEED FOR YOU TO KNOW ALL THAT.
YOU'RE NOT LIKE MAIDS AND MERCHANTS.
YOU HAVE YOUR OWN POSITION.
QUIT RUNNING AWAY FROM REALITY!
...
I'M NOT RUNNING AWAY.

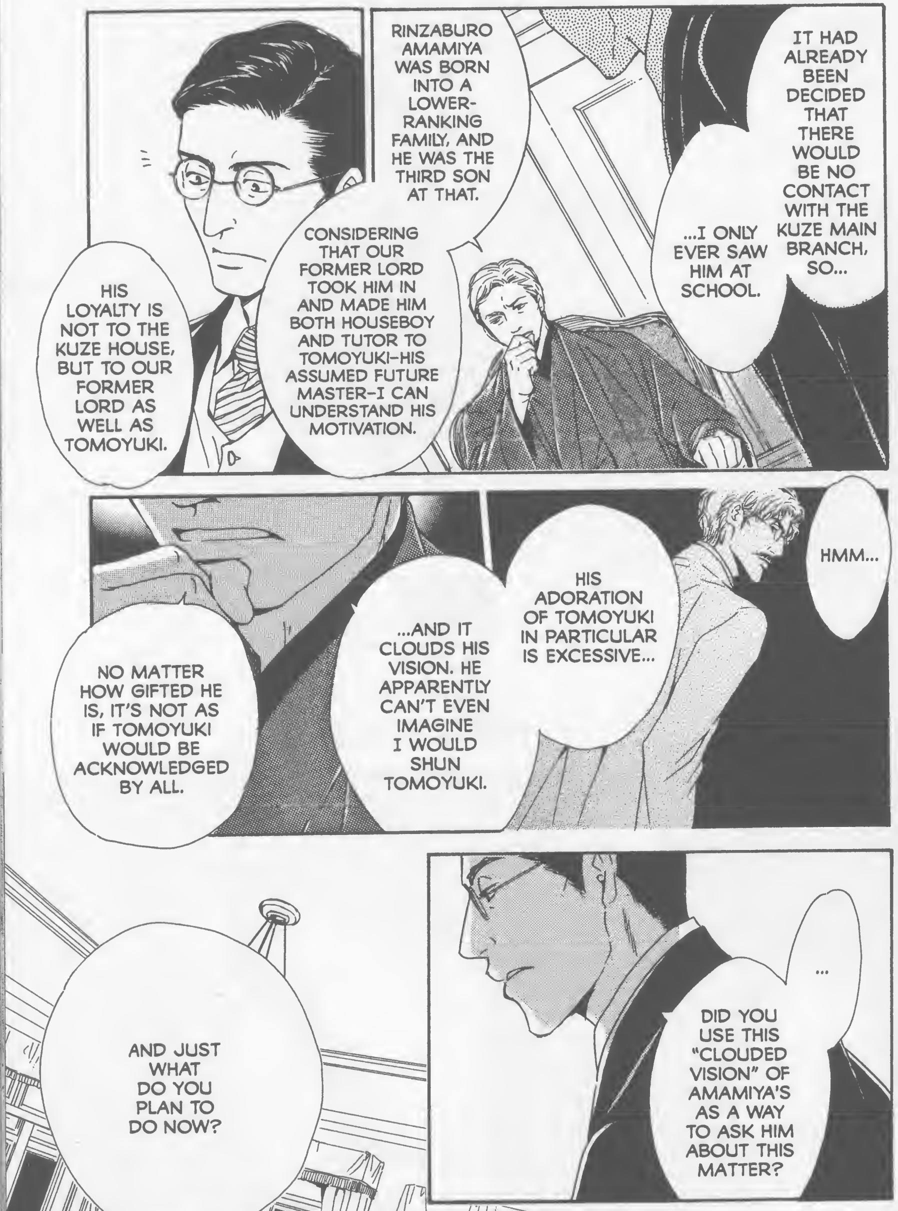

I JUST WANT TO KNOW.
I...
ALL I'VE KNOWN UP TO NOW IS WHAT KATSURAGI TAUGHT ME...
I WANT TO BUILD UP MY KNOWLEDGE OF THINGS I SEE WITH MY OWN EYES.
...
KUZE, WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?
ISHIZAKI.
DID YOU KNOW KATSURAGI LEFT THE KUZE HOUSE?

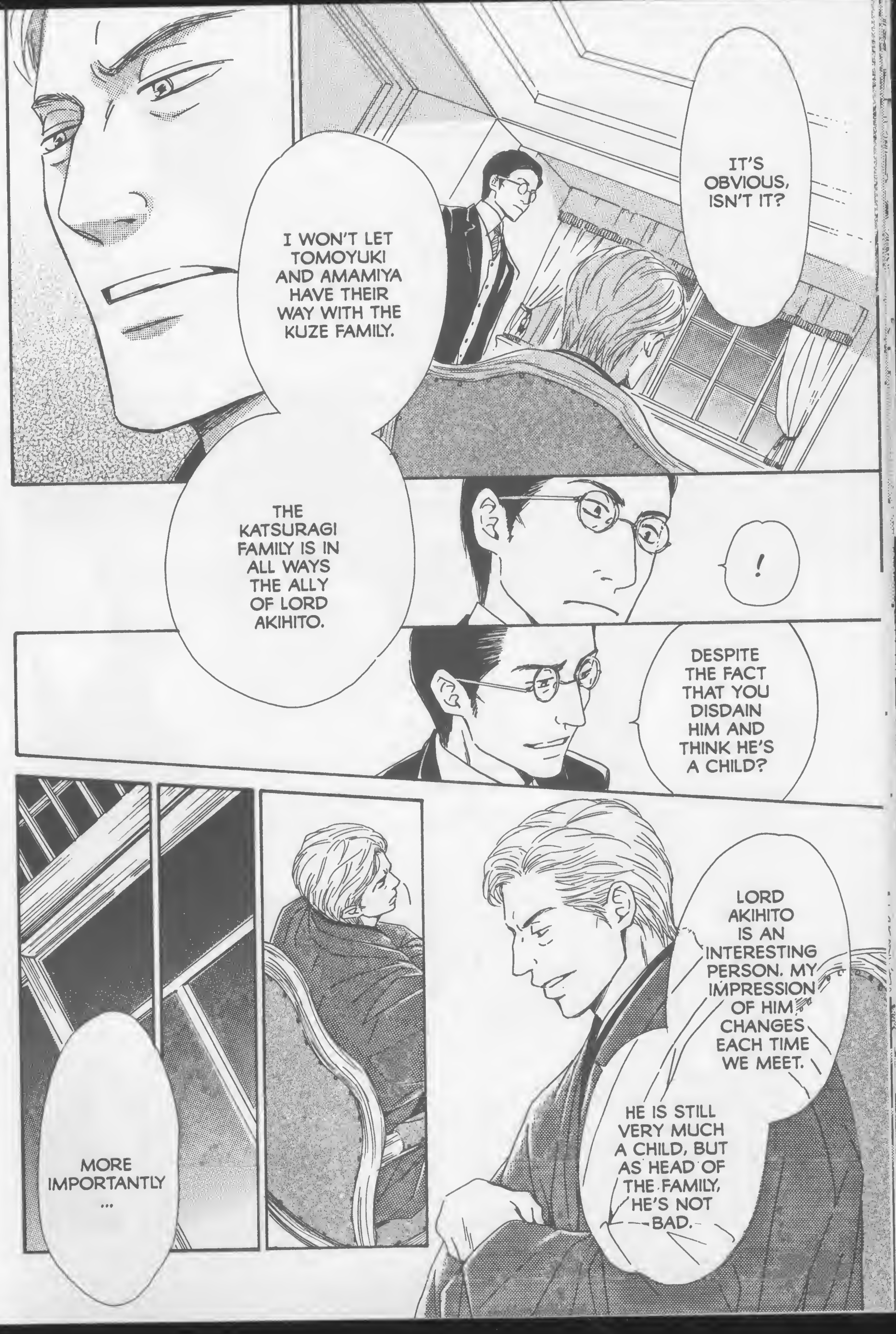

!
YOU DID, DIDN'T YOU? YOU DON'T HAVE TO HIDE IT.
I HAVE A PRETTY GOOD IDEA OF WHERE HE IS NOW AND WHAT HE SAID TO YOU.
I AT LEAST KNOW WHAT HE'S...WHAT KATSURAGI'S THINKING BY NOW.
...
IT'S FUNNY.
I MEAN, WHEN HE WAS WITH ME, I HAD NO IDEA WHAT HE WAS THINKING.

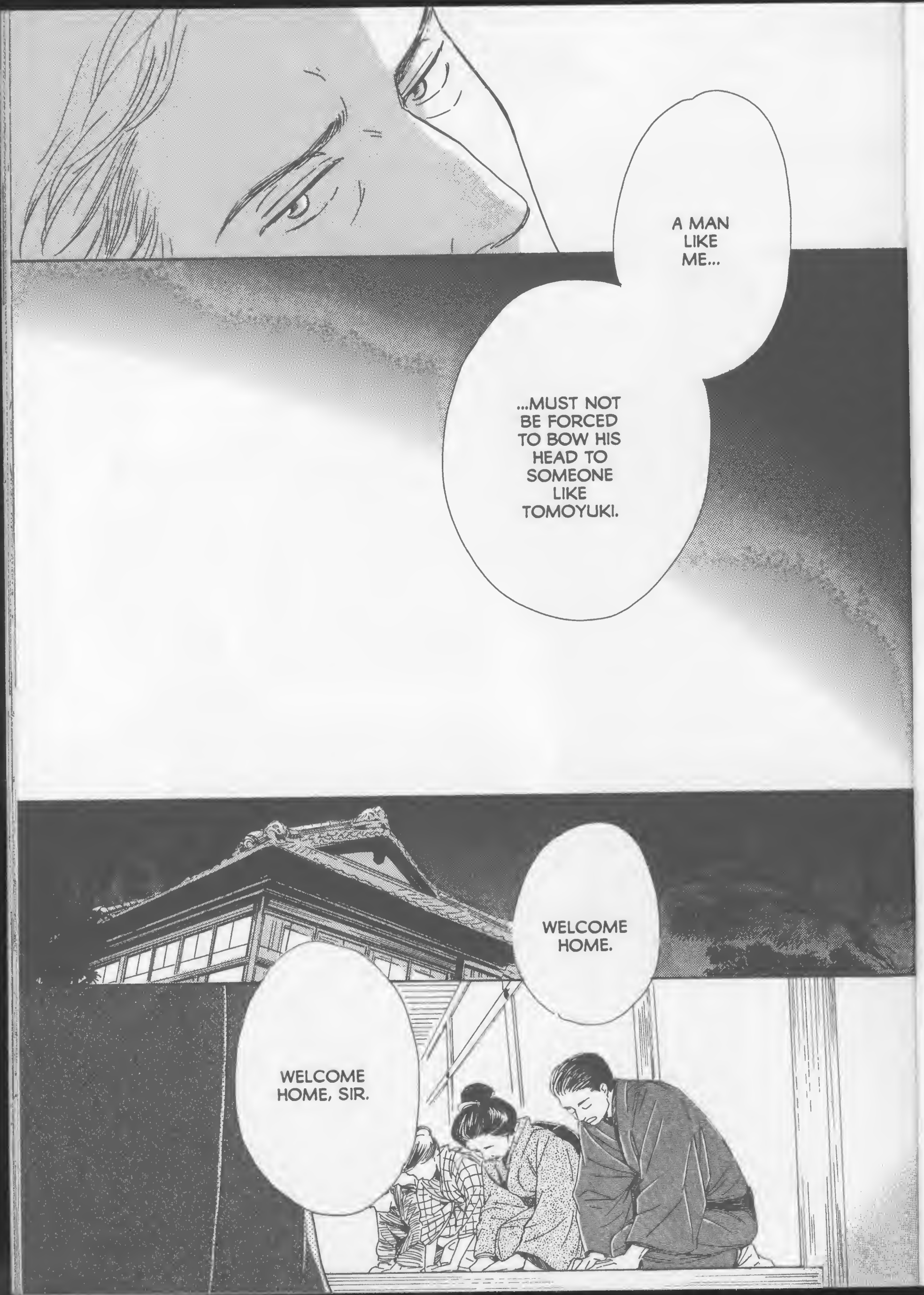

BEING APART FROM HIM LIKE THIS...
I NOW UNDERSTAND HIM ONLY TOO WELL.
WHAT?!

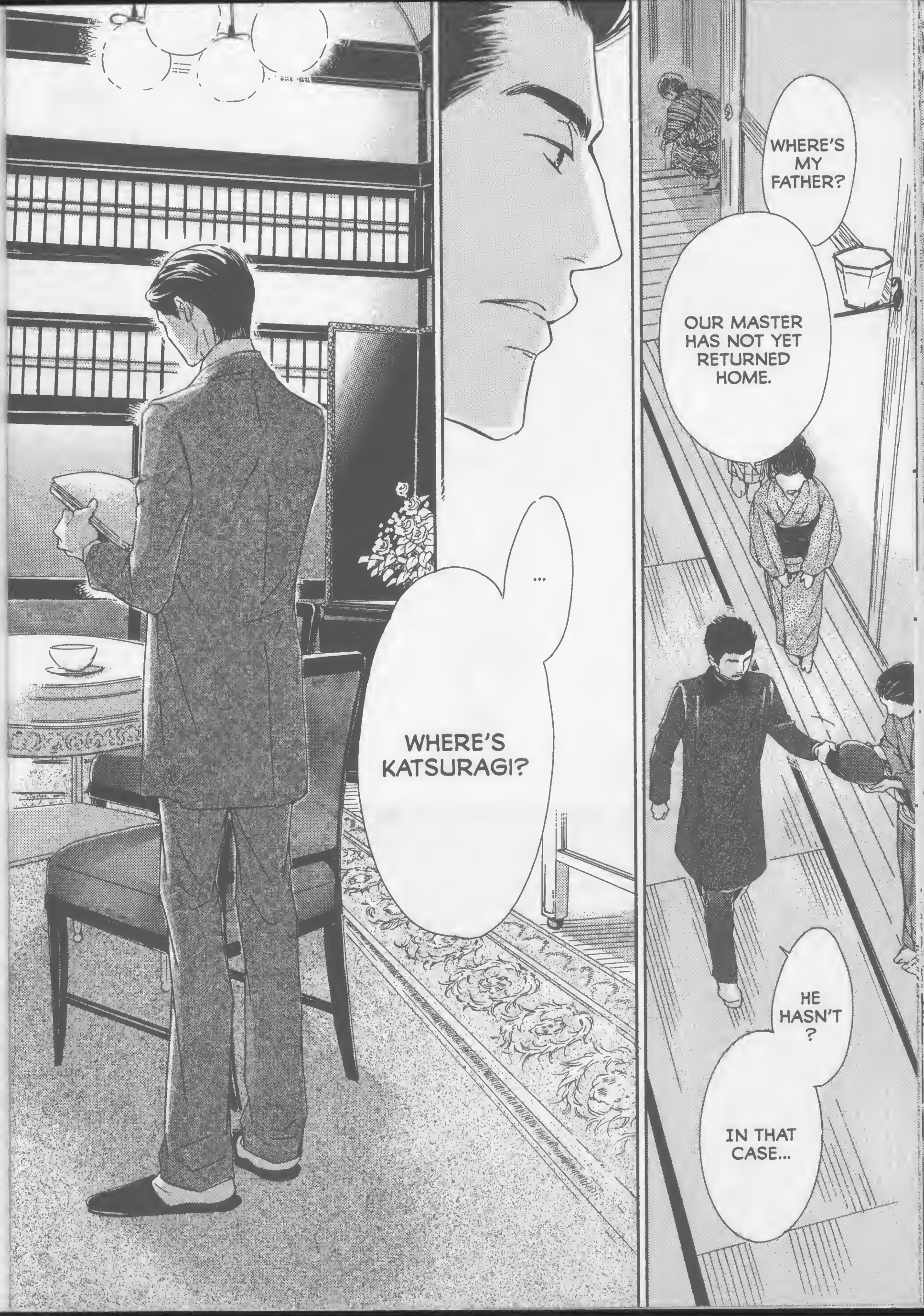

TOMOYUKI IS WHAT?!
THE ILLEGITIMATE CHILD OF OUR FORMER LORD, MASTER NAOYA KUZE?
KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN!
I DO APOLOGIZE. BUT WELL, YOU SAYING SOMETHING LIKE THAT...
IF IT'S TRUE, THEN MORE THAN A FEW THINGS BEGIN TO MAKE SENSE.
FATHER'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS TOMOYUKI WAS ALWAYS ODD.
I CAN STILL REMEMBER THE EXPRESSION ON HIS FACE WHEN IT WAS DECIDED THAT TOMOYUKI WOULD BE SENT TO THE KUZE HOUSE...
IT WAS AS IF A GREAT BURDEN WERE BEING LIFTED FROM HIM.
CRACK
IT MEANS...
...THAT IN THE END, FATHER WAS NOTHING MORE THAN A FEUDAL ERA SERVANT... LORD KUZE'S CHIEF RETAINER. THAT WAS THE EXTENT OF HIS CALIBER.

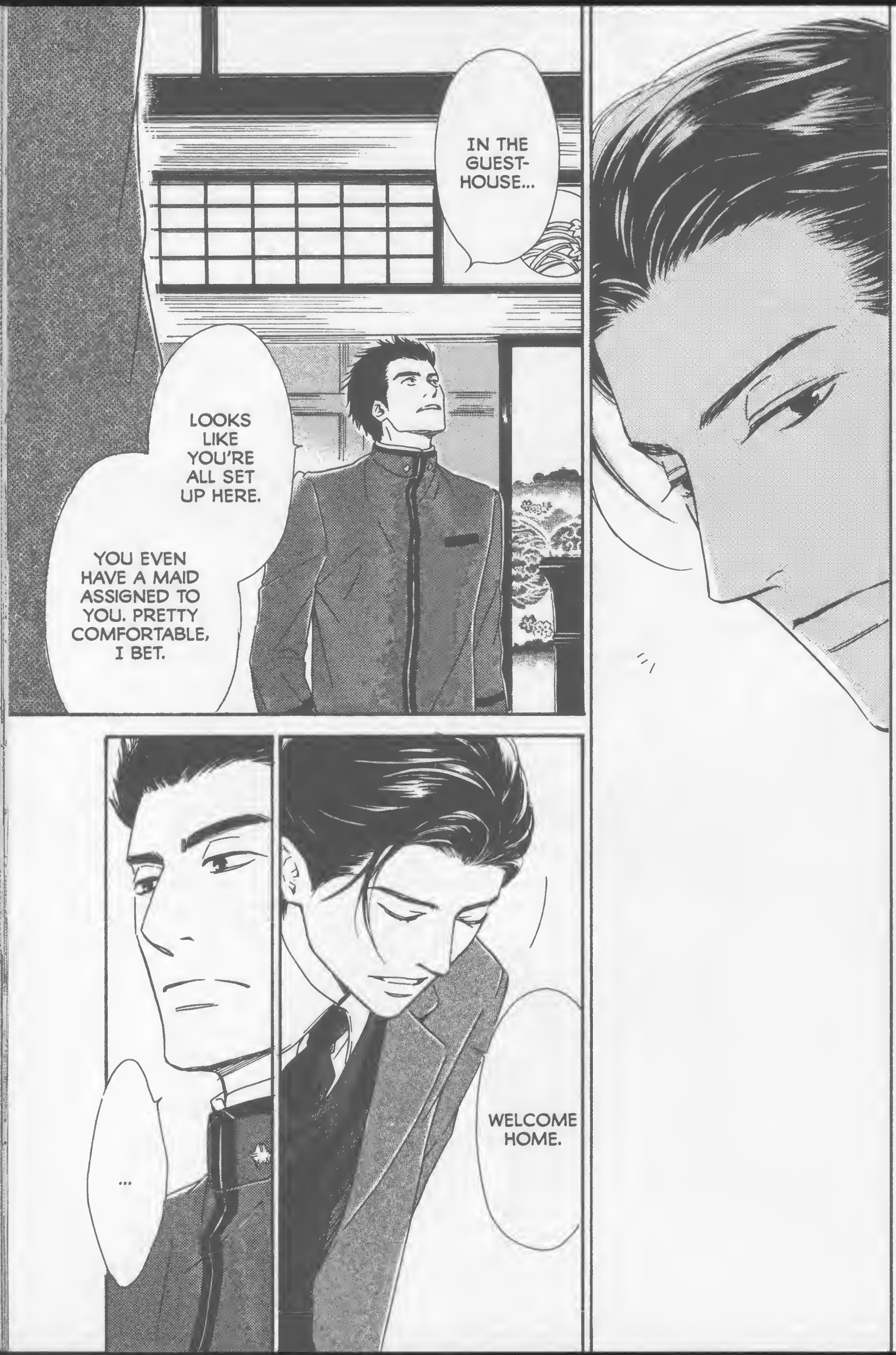

HE GAVE UP ON HIS OWN SUCCESS... ON EVERYTHING... TO CARRY THE LAST FLAME OF THE KUZE MAIN BRANCH...
HE MERELY CONTINUED FOLLOWING THE ORDERS OF OUR FORMER LORD WITH SIMPLE-MINDED DEVOTION.
...
BE THAT AS IT MAY, WHAT ABOUT AMAMIYA?
TO THINK THAT HE WOULD EVER COME BACK TO JAPAN!
I THOUGHT FOR SURE HE WOULD STAY IN AMERICA.
HE WAS IN HIGH SCHOOL AT THE SAME TIME AS YOU, IS THAT RIGHT?
YES.
HE WAS A VERY GIFTED MAN.

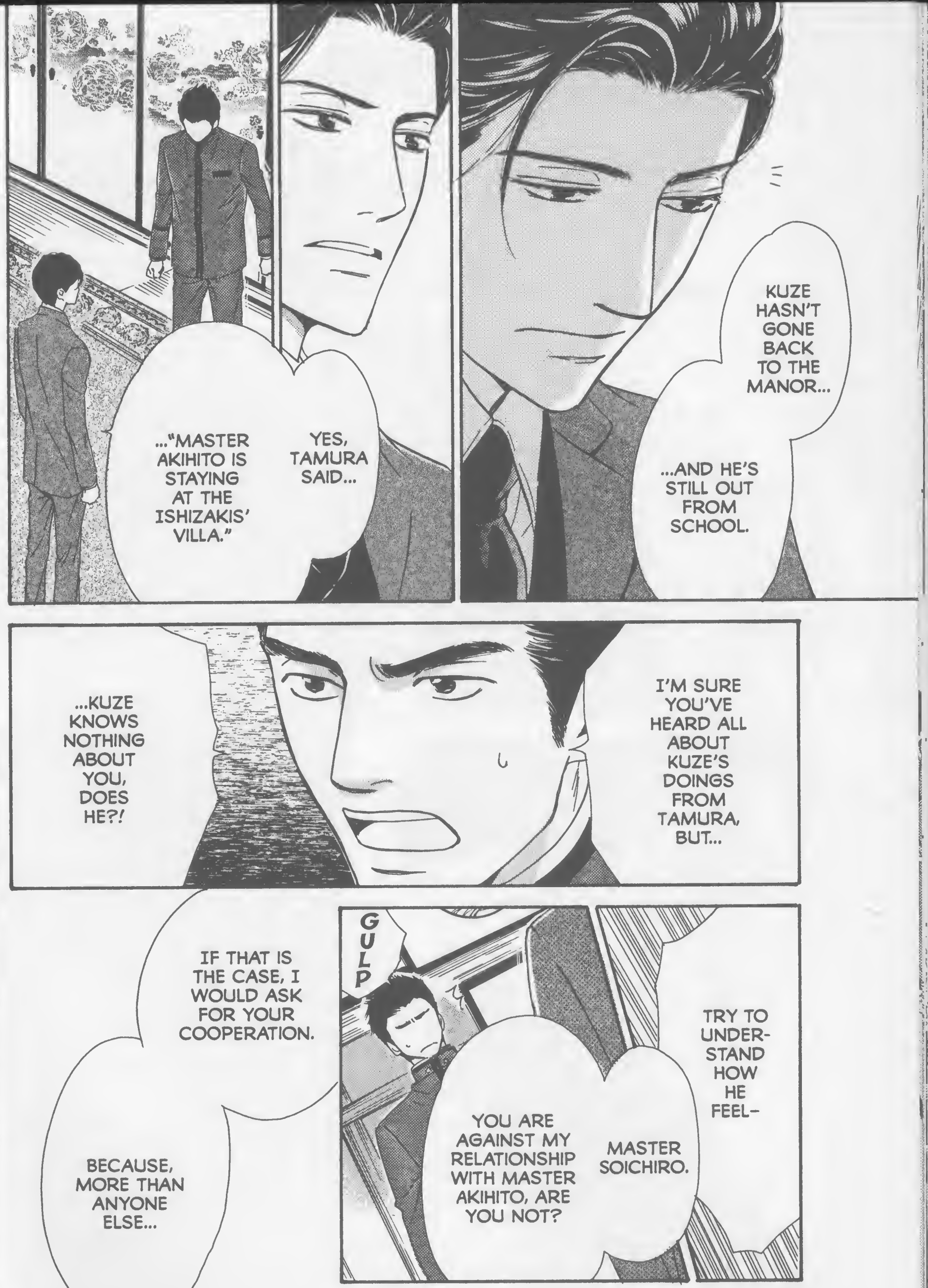

IT HAD ALREADY BEEN DECIDED THAT THERE WOULD BE NO CONTACT WITH THE KUZE MAIN BRANCH, SO...
...I ONLY EVER SAW HIM AT SCHOOL.
RINZABURO AMAMIYA WAS BORN INTO A LOWER-RANKING FAMILY, AND HE WAS THE THIRD SON AT THAT.
CONSIDERING THAT OUR FORMER LORD TOOK HIM IN AND MADE HIM BOTH HOUSEBOY AND TUTOR TO TOMOYUKI–HIS ASSUMED FUTURE MASTER–I CAN UNDERSTAND HIS MOTIVATION.
HIS LOYALTY IS NOT TO THE KUZE HOUSE, BUT TO OUR FORMER LORD AS WELL AS TOMOYUKI.
HMM...
HIS ADORATION OF TOMOYUKI IN PARTICULAR IS EXCESSIVE...
...AND IT CLOUDS HIS VISION. HE APPARENTLY CAN'T EVEN IMAGINE I WOULD SHUN TOMOYUKI.
NO MATTER HOW GIFTED HE IS, IT'S NOT AS IF TOMOYUKI WOULD BE ACKNOWLEDGED BY ALL.
...
DID YOU USE THIS "CLOUDED VISION" OF AMAMIYA'S AS A WAY TO ASK HIM ABOUT THIS MATTER?
AND JUST WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO NOW?

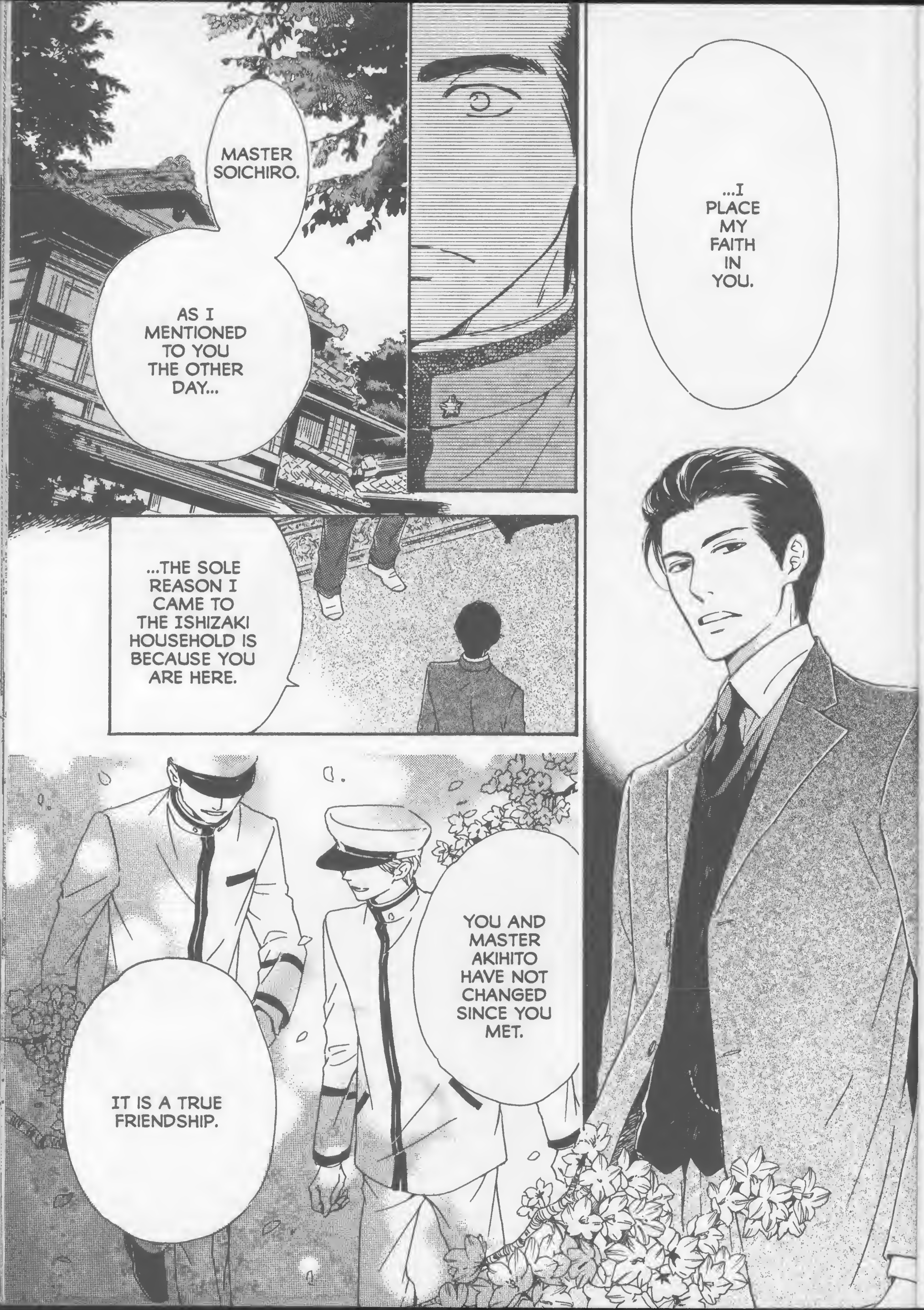

IT'S OBVIOUS, ISN'T IT?
I WON'T LET TOMOYUKI AND AMAMIYA HAVE THEIR WAY WITH THE KUZE FAMILY.
THE KATSURAGI FAMILY IS IN ALL WAYS THE ALLY OF LORD AKIHITO.
!
DESPITE THE FACT THAT YOU DISDAIN HIM AND THINK HE'S A CHILD?
LORD AKIHITO IS AN INTERESTING PERSON. MY IMPRESSION OF HIM CHANGES EACH TIME WE MEET.
HE IS STILL VERY MUCH A CHILD, BUT AS HEAD OF THE FAMILY, HE'S NOT BAD.
MORE IMPORTANTLY ...

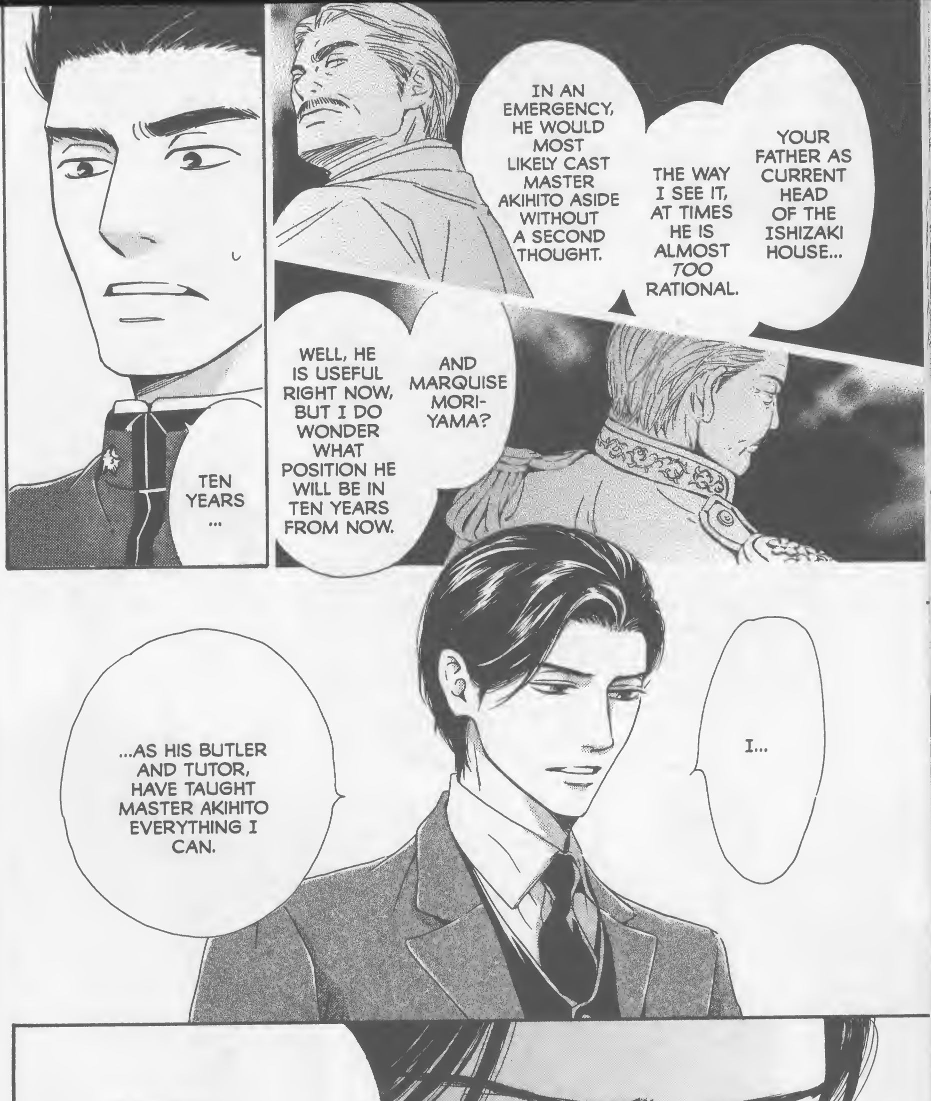

A MAN LIKE ME...
...MUST NOT BE FORCED TO BOW HIS HEAD TO SOMEONE LIKE TOMOYUKI.
WELCOME HOME.
WELCOME HOME, SIR.

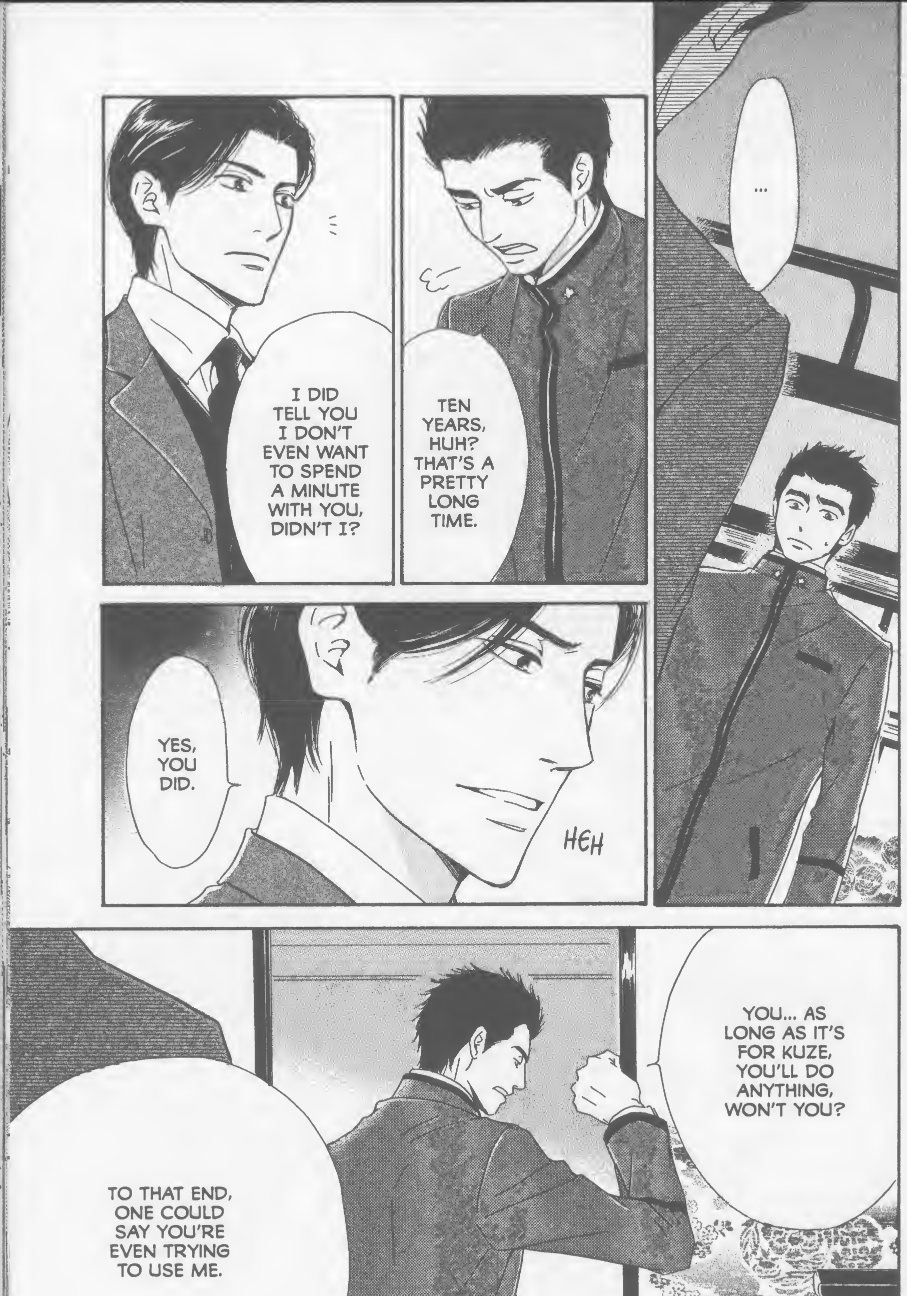

WHERE'S MY FATHER?
OUR MASTER HAS NOT YET RETURNED HOME.
HE HASN'T?
IN THAT CASE...
...
WHERE'S KATSURAGI?

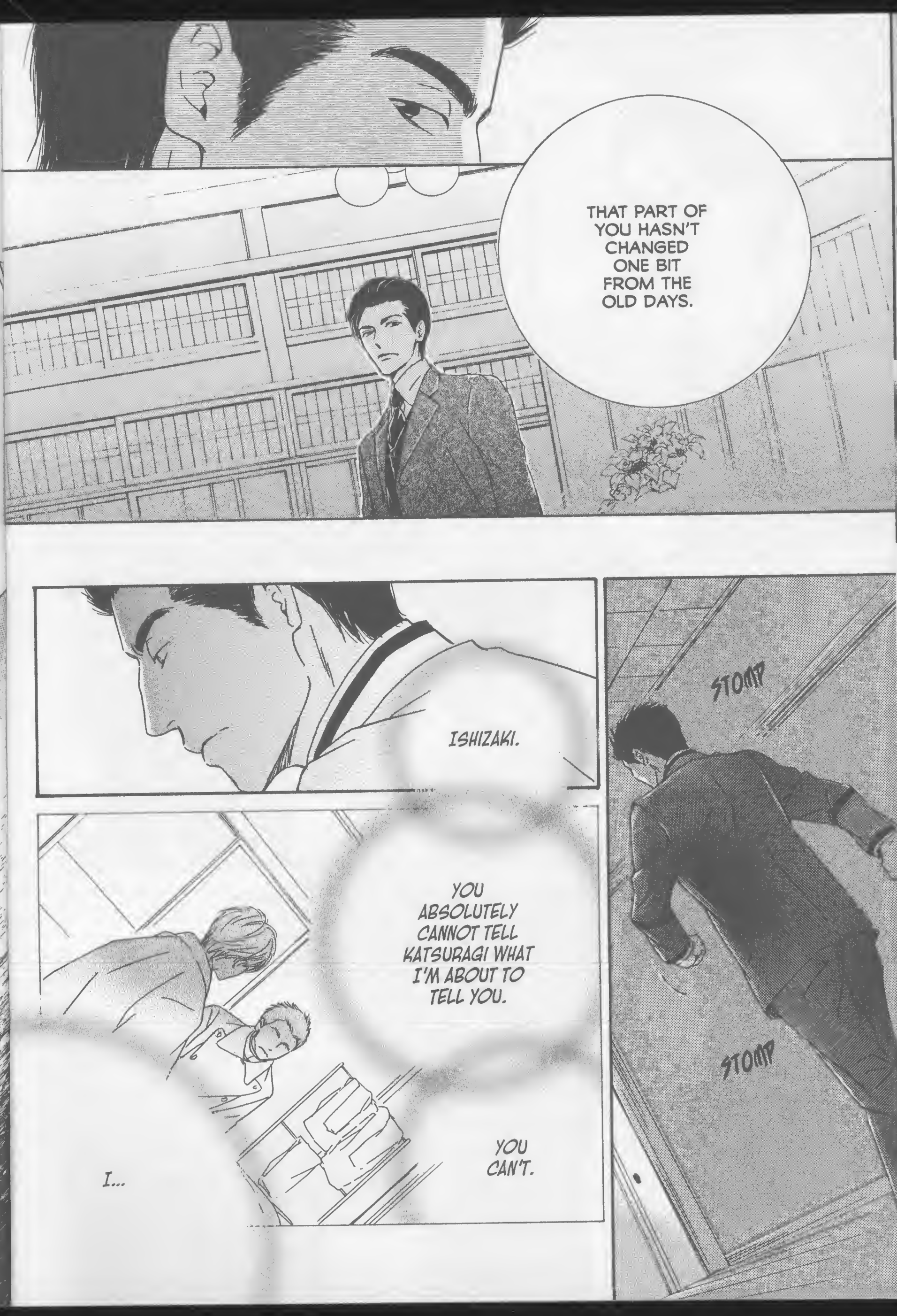

IN THE GUEST-HOUSE...
LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE ALL SET UP HERE.
YOU EVEN HAVE A MAID ASSIGNED TO YOU. PRETTY COMFORTABLE, I BET.
WELCOME HOME.
...

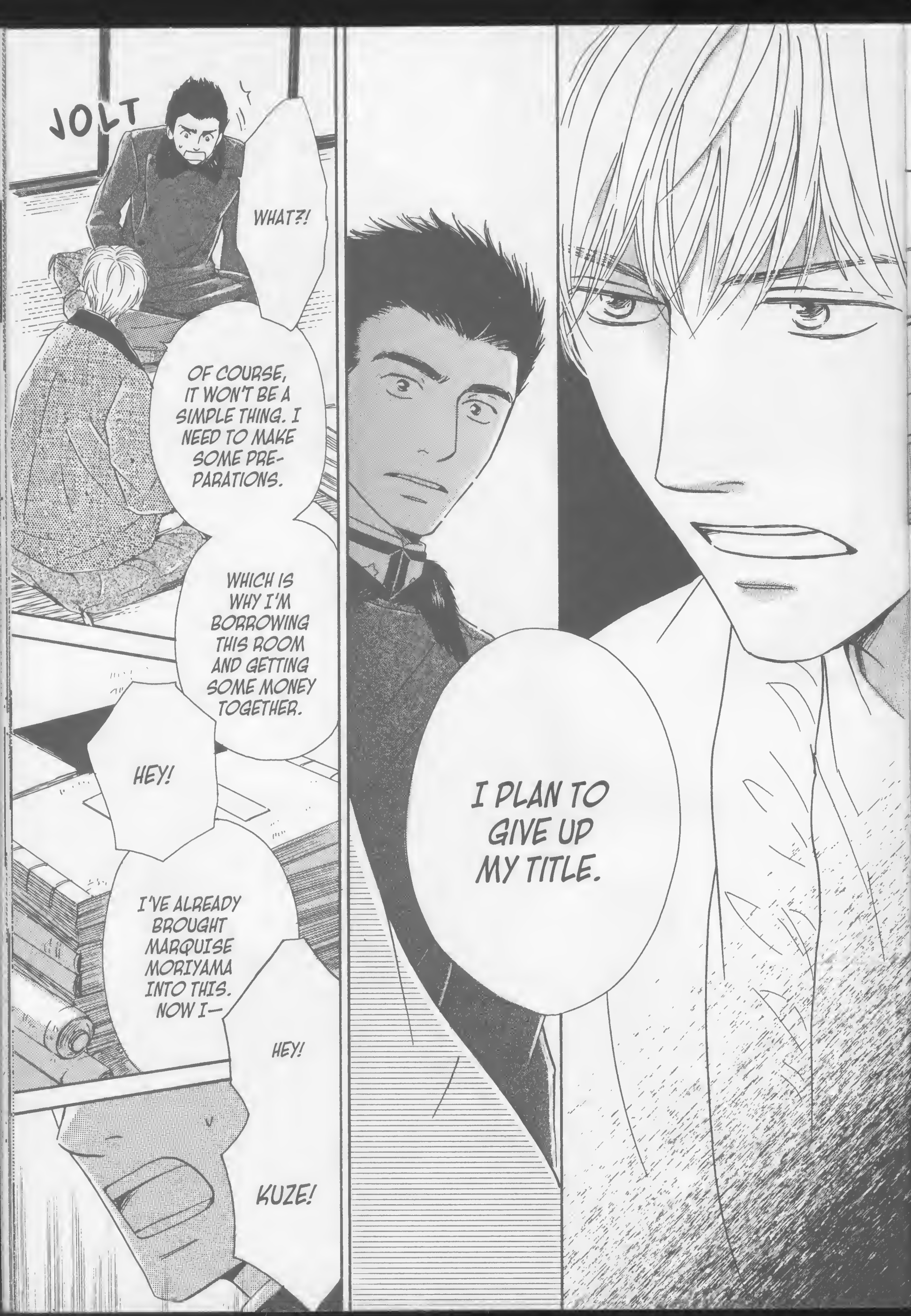

KUZE HASN'T GONE BACK TO THE MANOR...
...AND HE'S STILL OUT FROM SCHOOL.
YES, TAMURA SAID...
..."MASTER AKIHITO IS STAYING AT THE ISHIZAKIS' VILLA."
I'M SURE YOU'VE HEARD ALL ABOUT KUZE'S DOINGS FROM TAMURA, BUT...
...KUZE KNOWS NOTHING ABOUT YOU, DOES HE?!
TRY TO UNDERSTAND HOW HE FEEL–
MASTER SOICHIRO.
YOU ARE AGAINST MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MASTER AKIHITO, ARE YOU NOT?
GULP
IF THAT IS THE CASE, I WOULD ASK FOR YOUR COOPERATION.
BECAUSE, MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE...

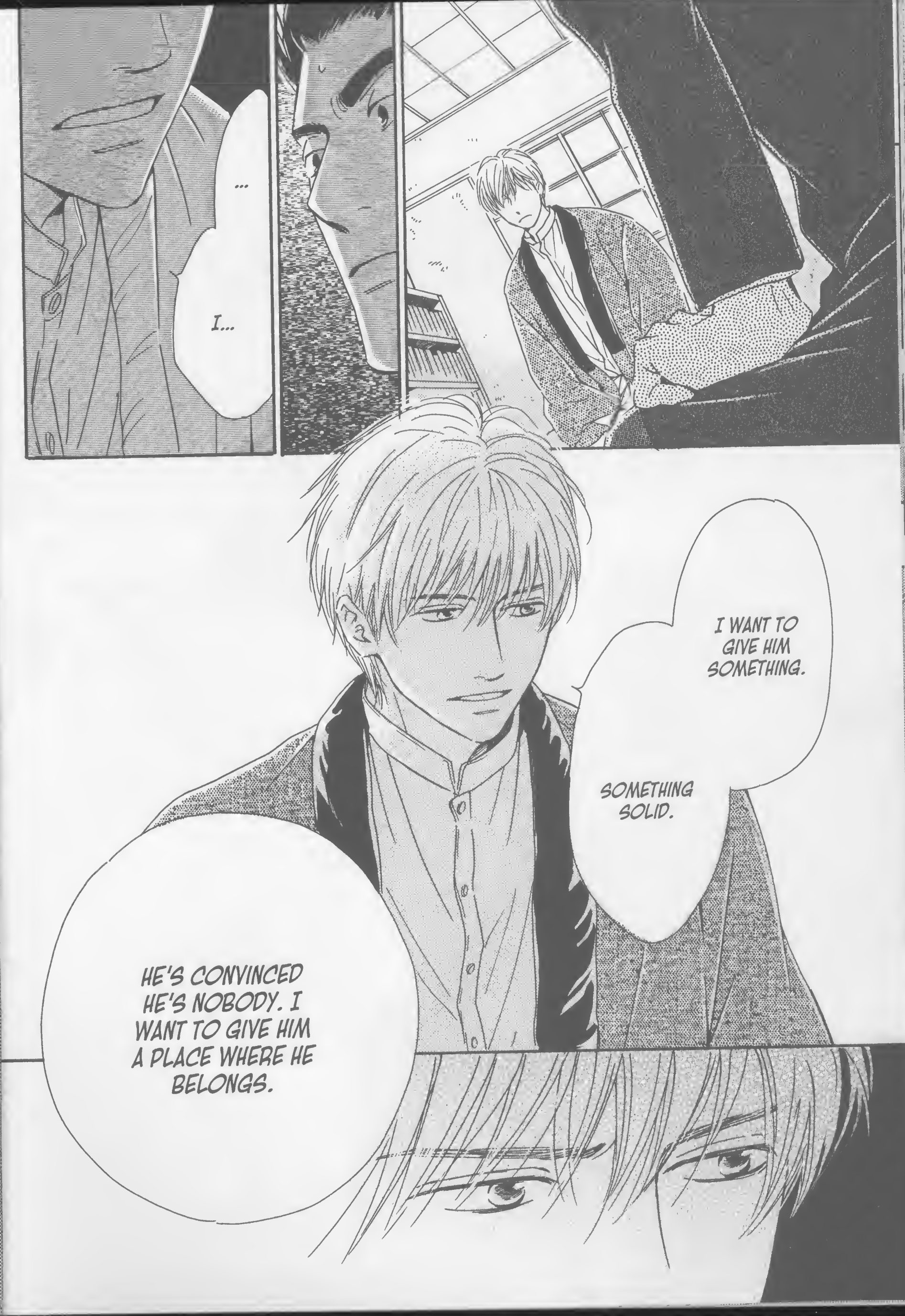

...I PLACE MY FAITH IN YOU.
MASTER SOICHIRO.
AS I MENTIONED TO YOU THE OTHER DAY...
...THE SOLE REASON I CAME TO THE ISHIZAKI HOUSEHOLD IS BECAUSE YOU ARE HERE.
YOU AND MASTER AKIHITO HAVE NOT CHANGED SINCE YOU MET.
IT IS A TRUE FRIENDSHIP.

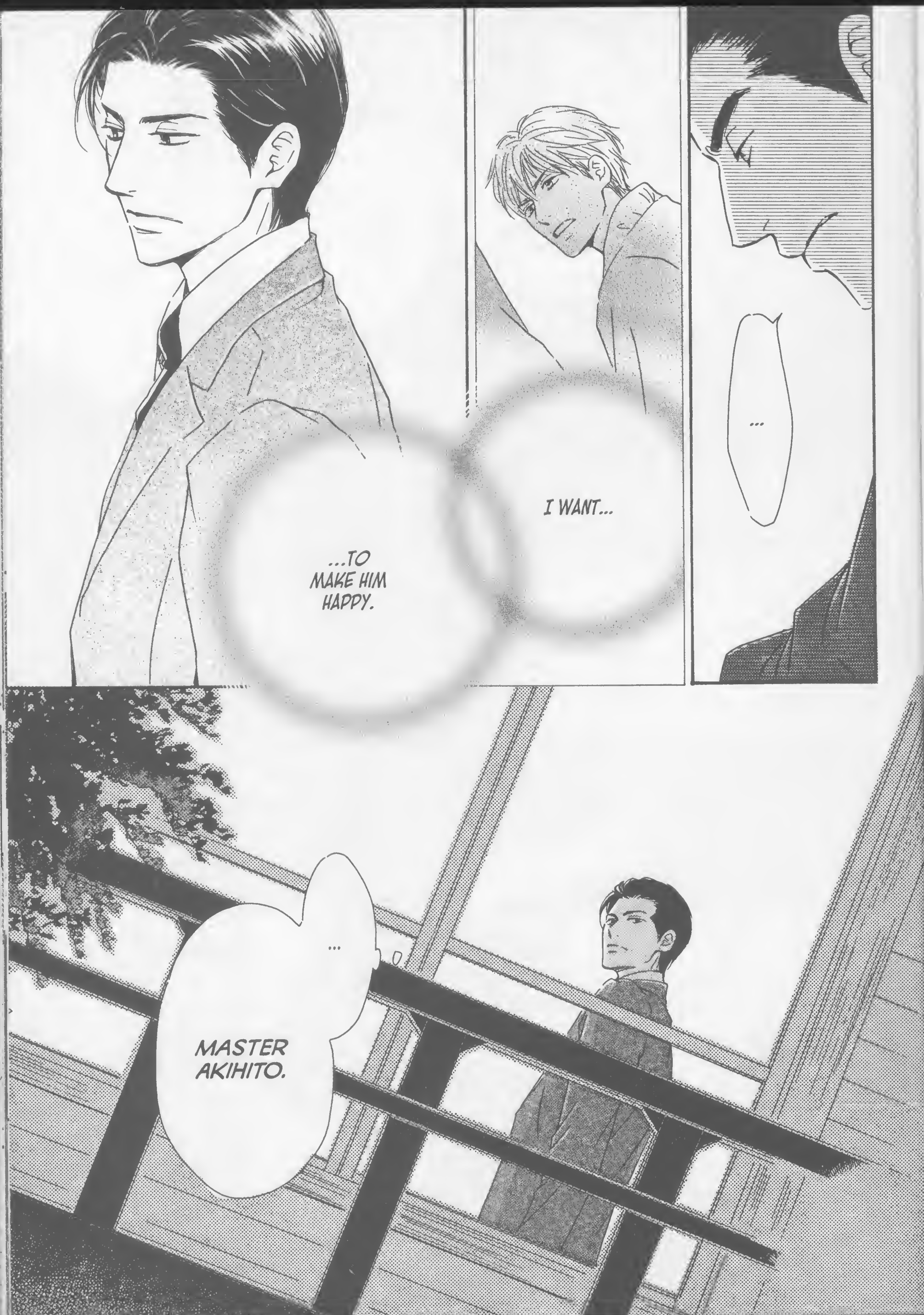

YOUR FATHER AS CURRENT HEAD OF THE ISHIZAKI HOUSE...
THE WAY I SEE IT, AT TIMES HE IS ALMOST *TOO* RATIONAL.
IN AN EMERGENCY, HE WOULD MOST LIKELY CAST MASTER AKIHITO ASIDE WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT.
AND MARQUISE MORI-YAMA?
WELL, HE IS USEFUL RIGHT NOW, BUT I DO WONDER WHAT POSITION HE WILL BE IN TEN YEARS FROM NOW.
TEN YEARS ...
I...
...AS HIS BUTLER AND TUTOR, HAVE TAUGHT MASTER AKIHITO EVERYTHING I CAN.
FROM NOW ON, I MUST PROVIDE MY SUPPORT FROM THE OUTSIDE.

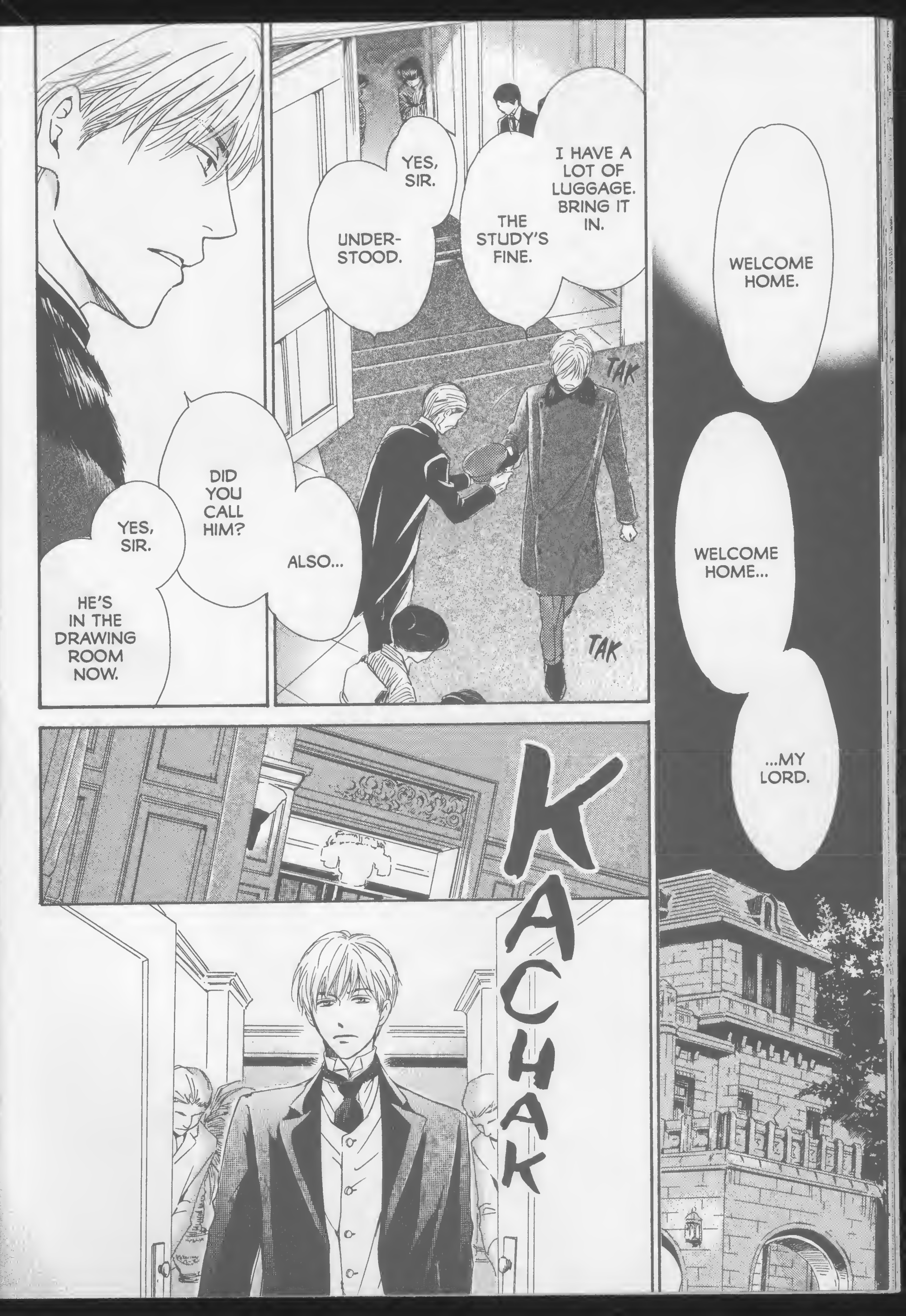

...
TEN YEARS, HUH? THAT'S A PRETTY LONG TIME.
I DID TELL YOU I DON'T EVEN WANT TO SPEND A MINUTE WITH YOU, DIDN'T I?
YES, YOU DID.
HEH
YOU... AS LONG AS IT'S FOR KUZE, YOU'LL DO ANYTHING, WON'T YOU?
TO THAT END, ONE COULD SAY YOU'RE EVEN TRYING TO USE ME.

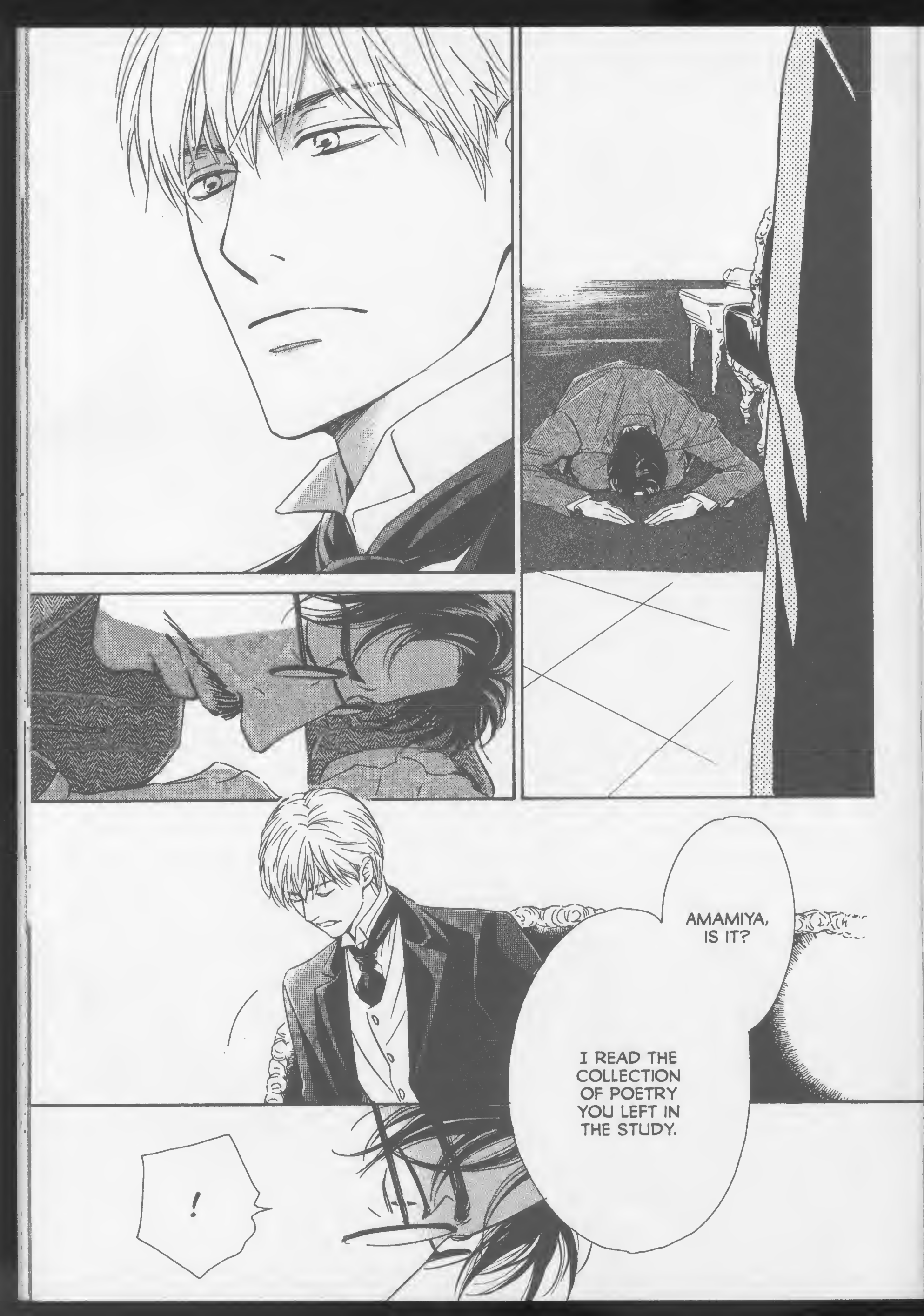

THAT PART OF YOU HASN'T CHANGED ONE BIT FROM THE OLD DAYS.
STOMP
STOMP
ISHIZAKI.
YOU ABSOLUTELY CANNOT TELL KATSURAGI WHAT I'M ABOUT TO TELL YOU.
YOU CAN'T.
I...

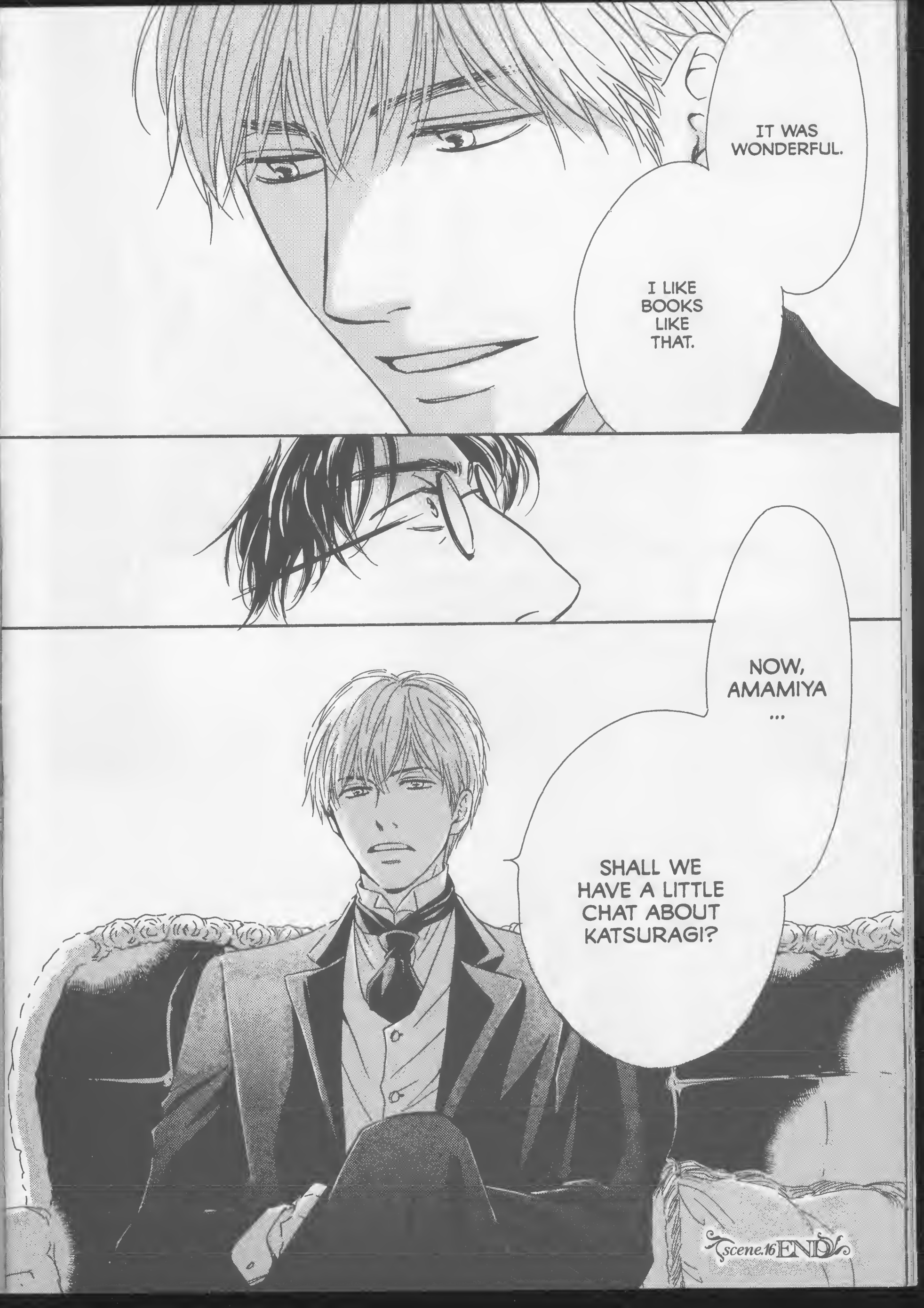

I PLAN TO GIVE UP MY TITLE.
JOLT
WHAT?!
OF COURSE, IT WON'T BE A SIMPLE THING. I NEED TO MAKE SOME PREPARATIONS.
WHICH IS WHY I'M BORROWING THIS ROOM AND GETTING SOME MONEY TOGETHER.
HEY!
I'VE ALREADY BROUGHT MARQUISE MORIYAMA INTO THIS. NOW I—
HEY!
KUZE!


...
I...
I WANT TO GIVE HIM SOMETHING.
SOMETHING SOLID.
HE'S CONVINCED HE'S NOBODY. I WANT TO GIVE HIM A PLACE WHERE HE BELONGS.


...
I WANT...
...TO MAKE HIM HAPPY.
...
MASTER AKIHITO.

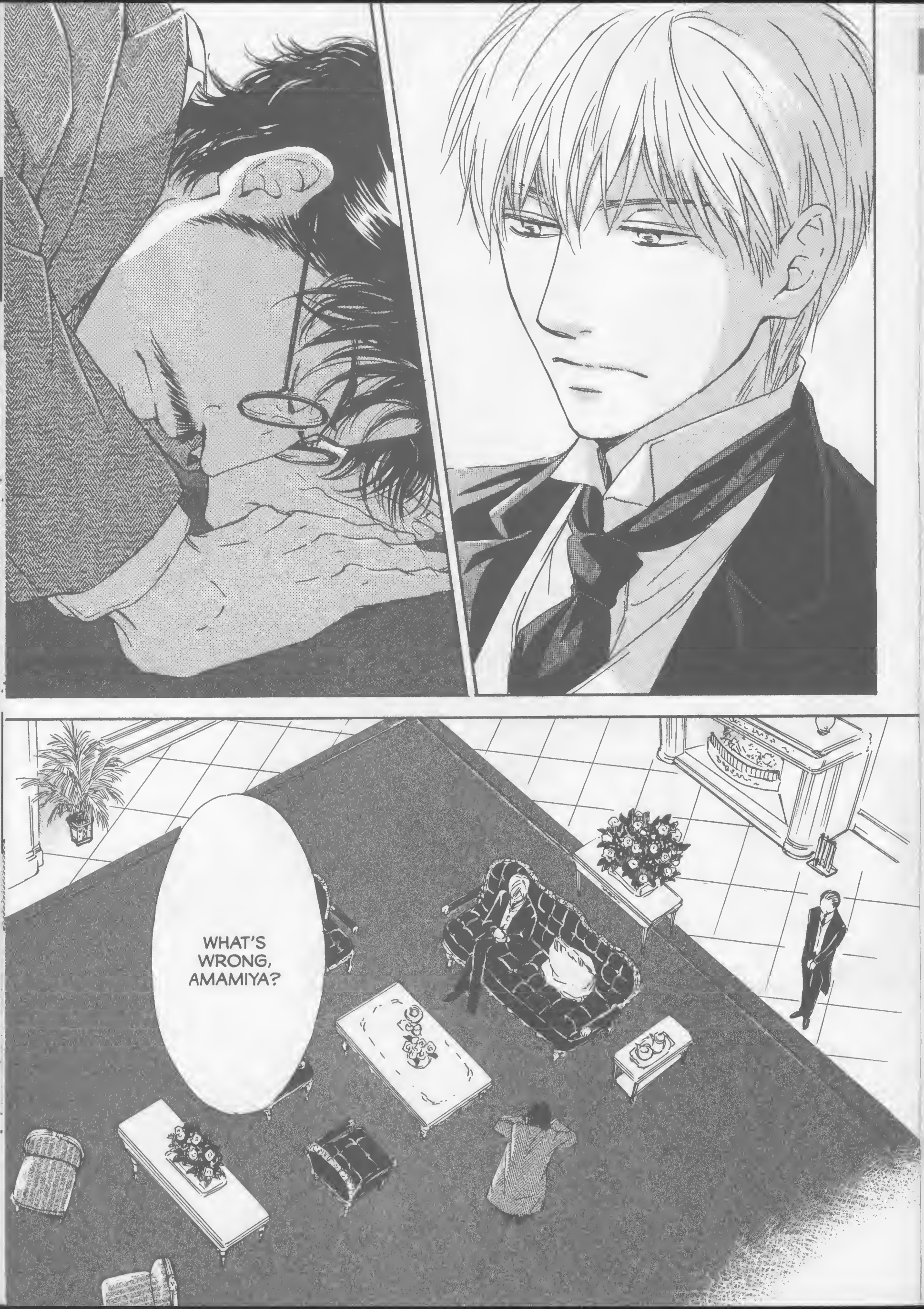

WELCOME HOME.
WELCOME HOME...
...MY LORD.
KACHAK
I HAVE A LOT OF LUGGAGE. BRING IT IN.
THE STUDY'S FINE.
YES, SIR.
UNDERSTOOD.
TAK
TAK
ALSO...
DID YOU CALL HIM?
YES, SIR.
HE'S IN THE DRAWING ROOM NOW.


AMAMIYA, IS IT?
I READ THE COLLECTION OF POETRY YOU LEFT IN THE STUDY.
!


IT WAS WONDERFUL.
I LIKE BOOKS LIKE THAT.
NOW, AMAMIYA ...
SHALL WE HAVE A LITTLE CHAT ABOUT KATSURAGI?
scene.16 END

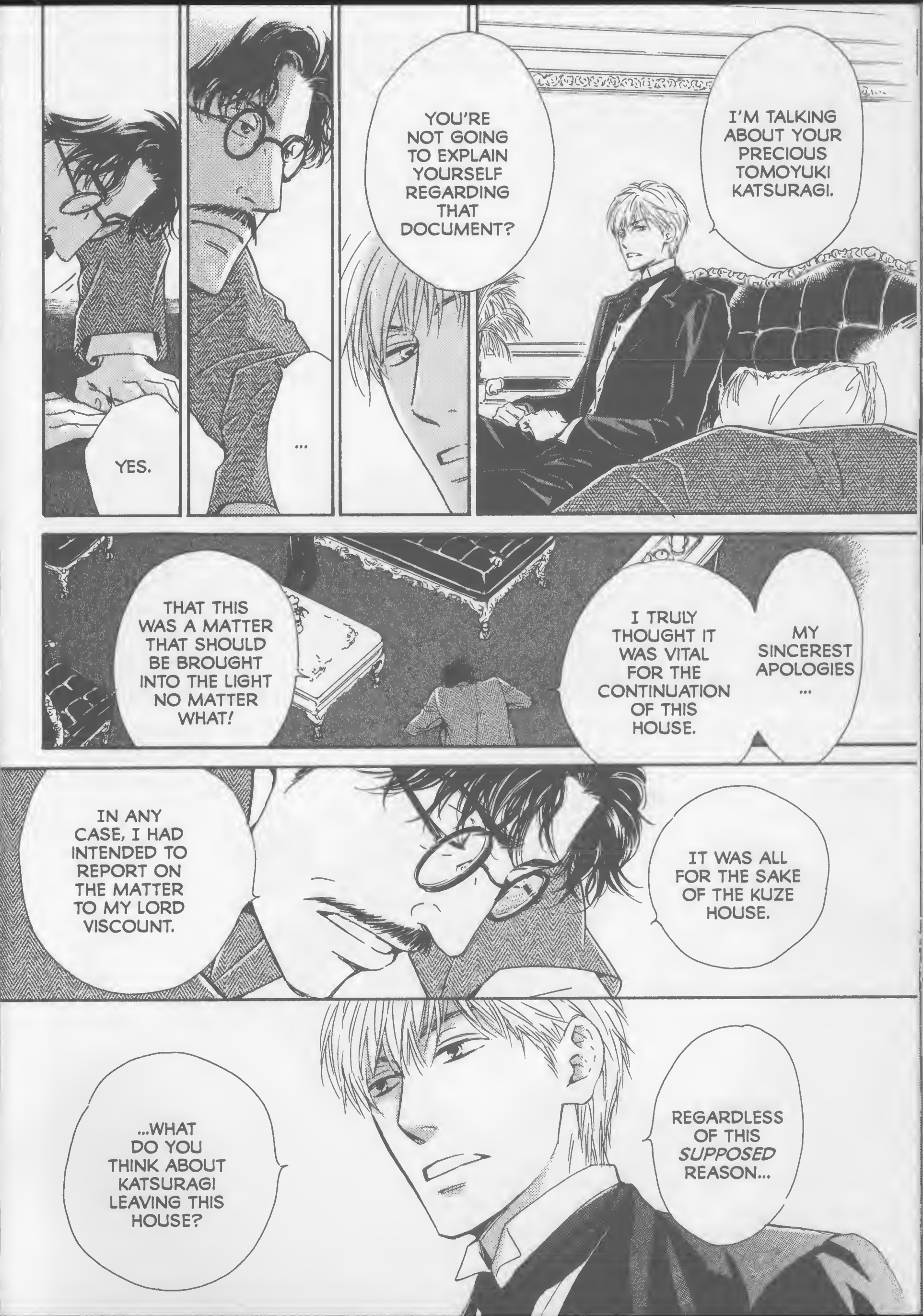
Blue Morning: Scene 17

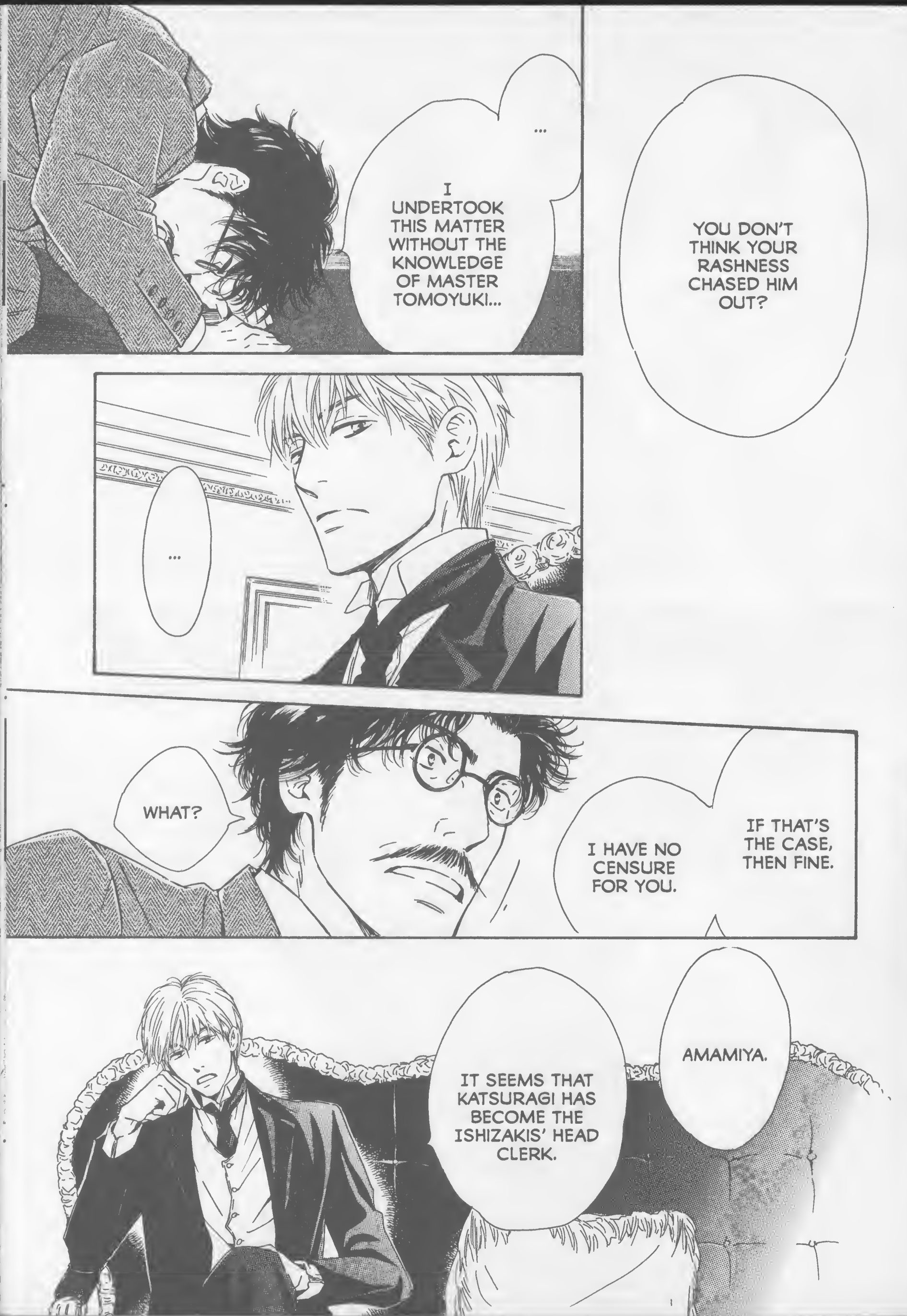
憂鬱な朝
scene.17

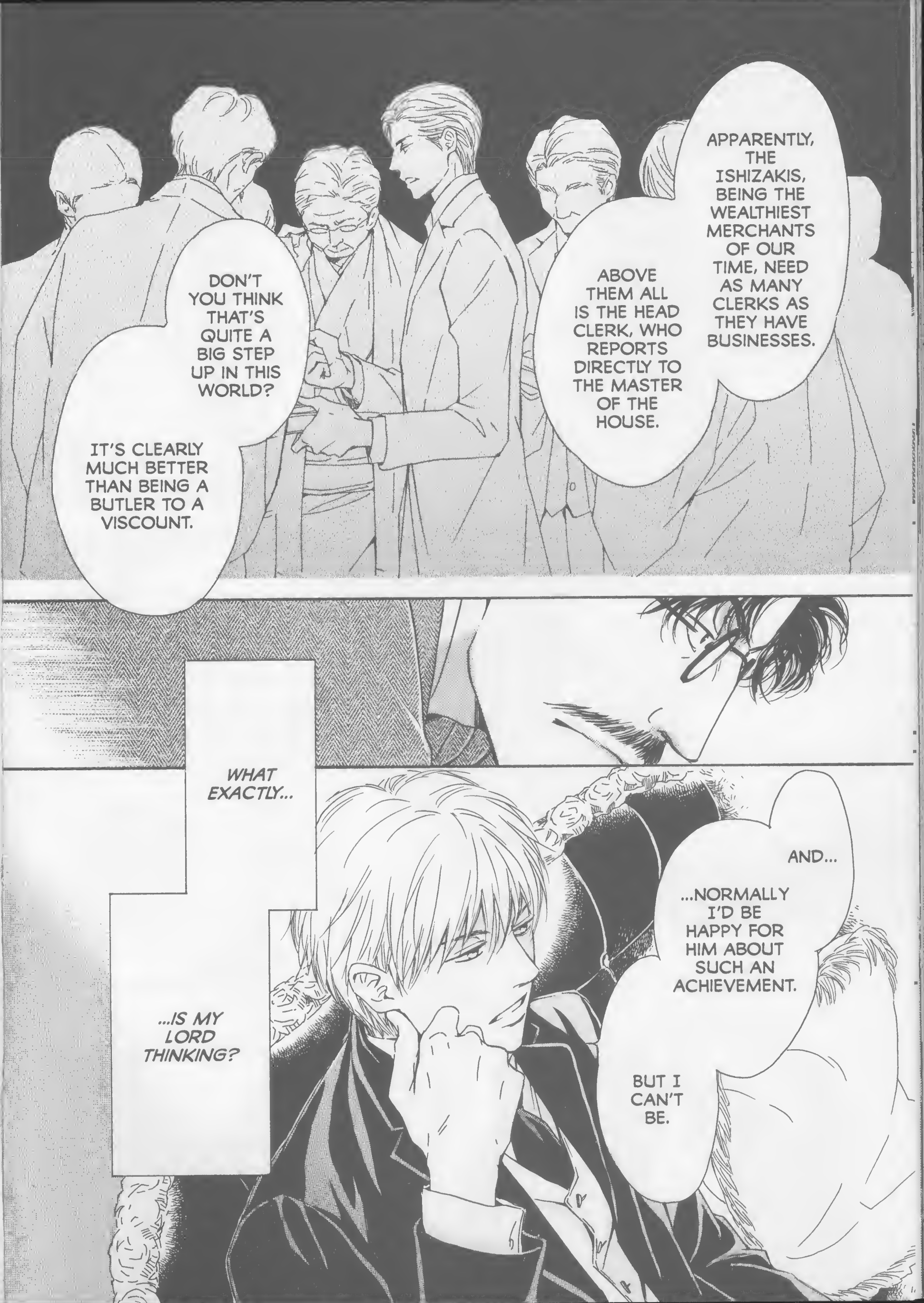

WHAT'S WRONG, AMAMIYA?

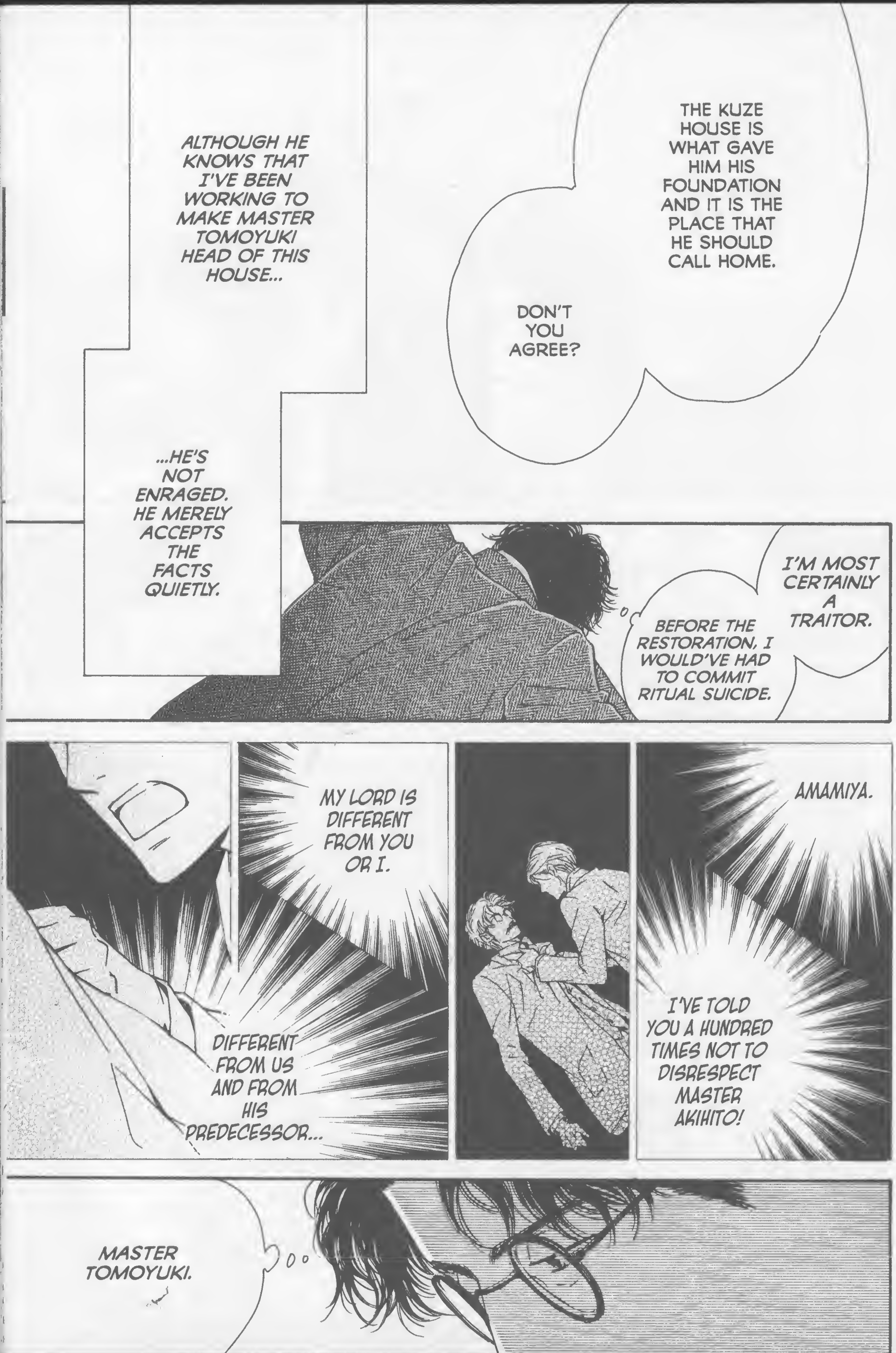
Blue Morning

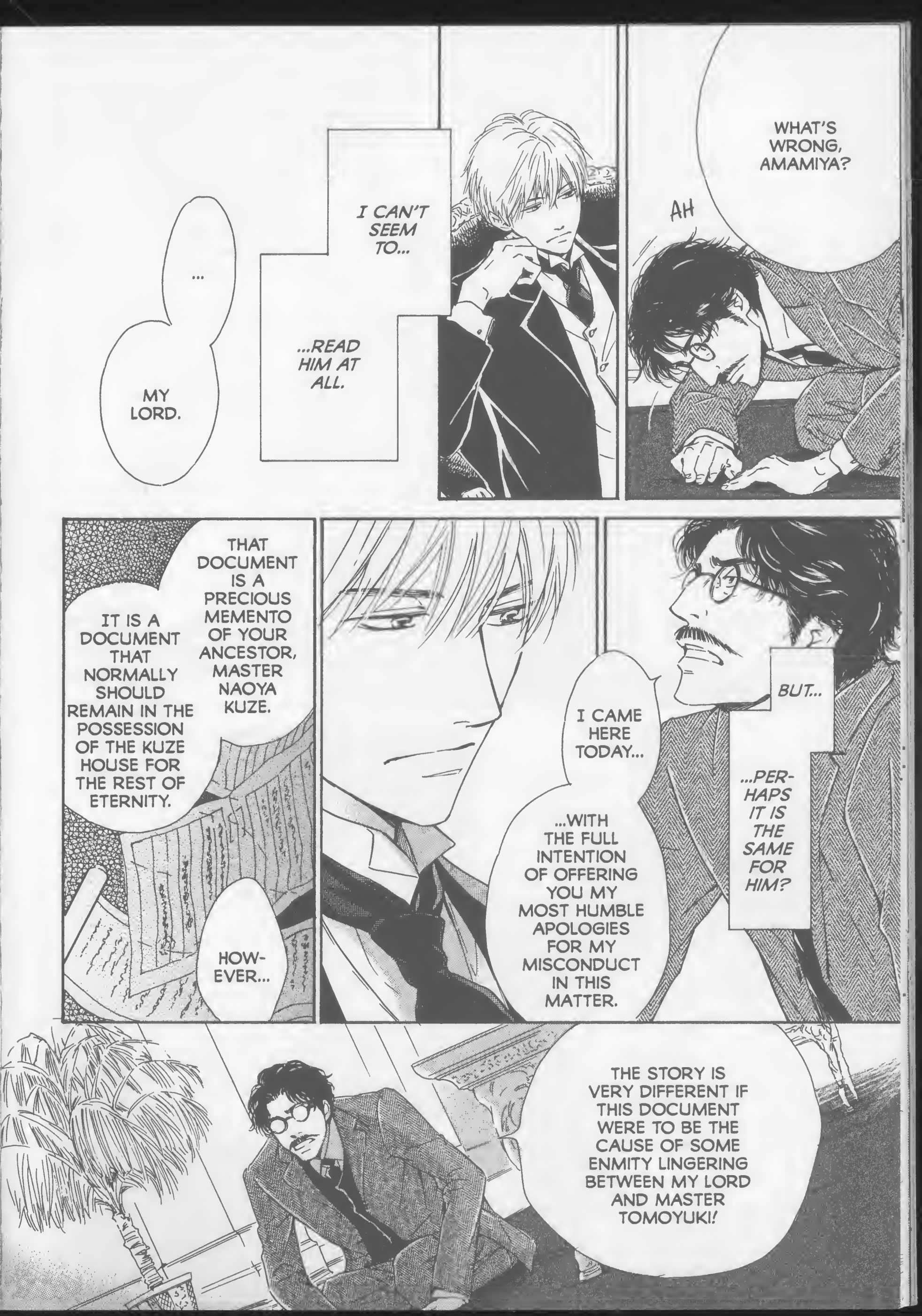
憂鬱な朝

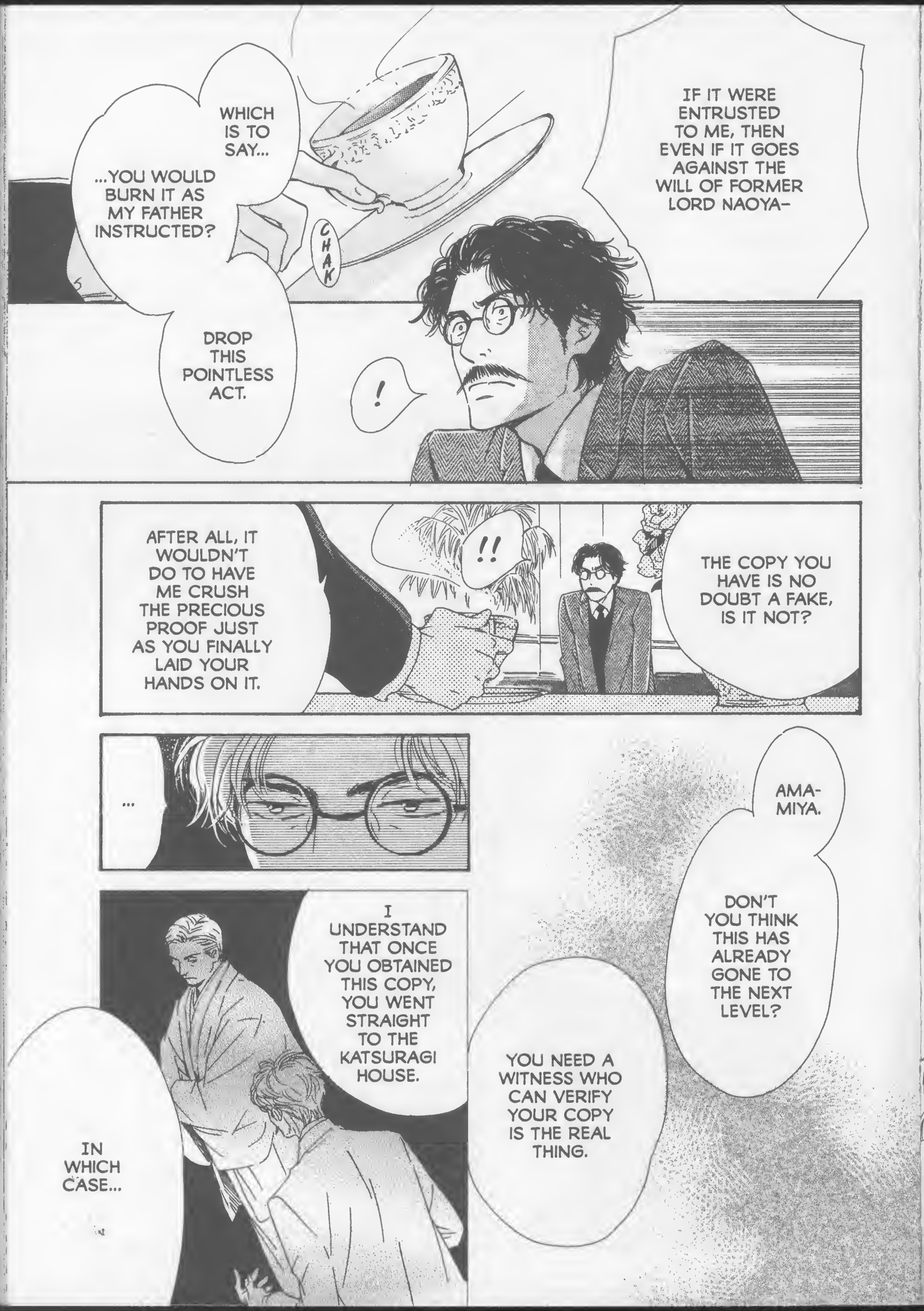

I'M TALKING ABOUT YOUR PRECIOUS TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI.
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO EXPLAIN YOURSELF REGARDING THAT DOCUMENT?
...
YES.
MY SINCEREST APOLOGIES...
I TRULY THOUGHT IT WAS VITAL FOR THE CONTINUATION OF THIS HOUSE.
THAT THIS WAS A MATTER THAT SHOULD BE BROUGHT INTO THE LIGHT NO MATTER WHAT!
IT WAS ALL FOR THE SAKE OF THE KUZE HOUSE.
IN ANY CASE, I HAD INTENDED TO REPORT ON THE MATTER TO MY LORD VISCOUNT.
REGARDLESS OF THIS *SUPPOSED* REASON...
...WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT KATSURAGI LEAVING THIS HOUSE?

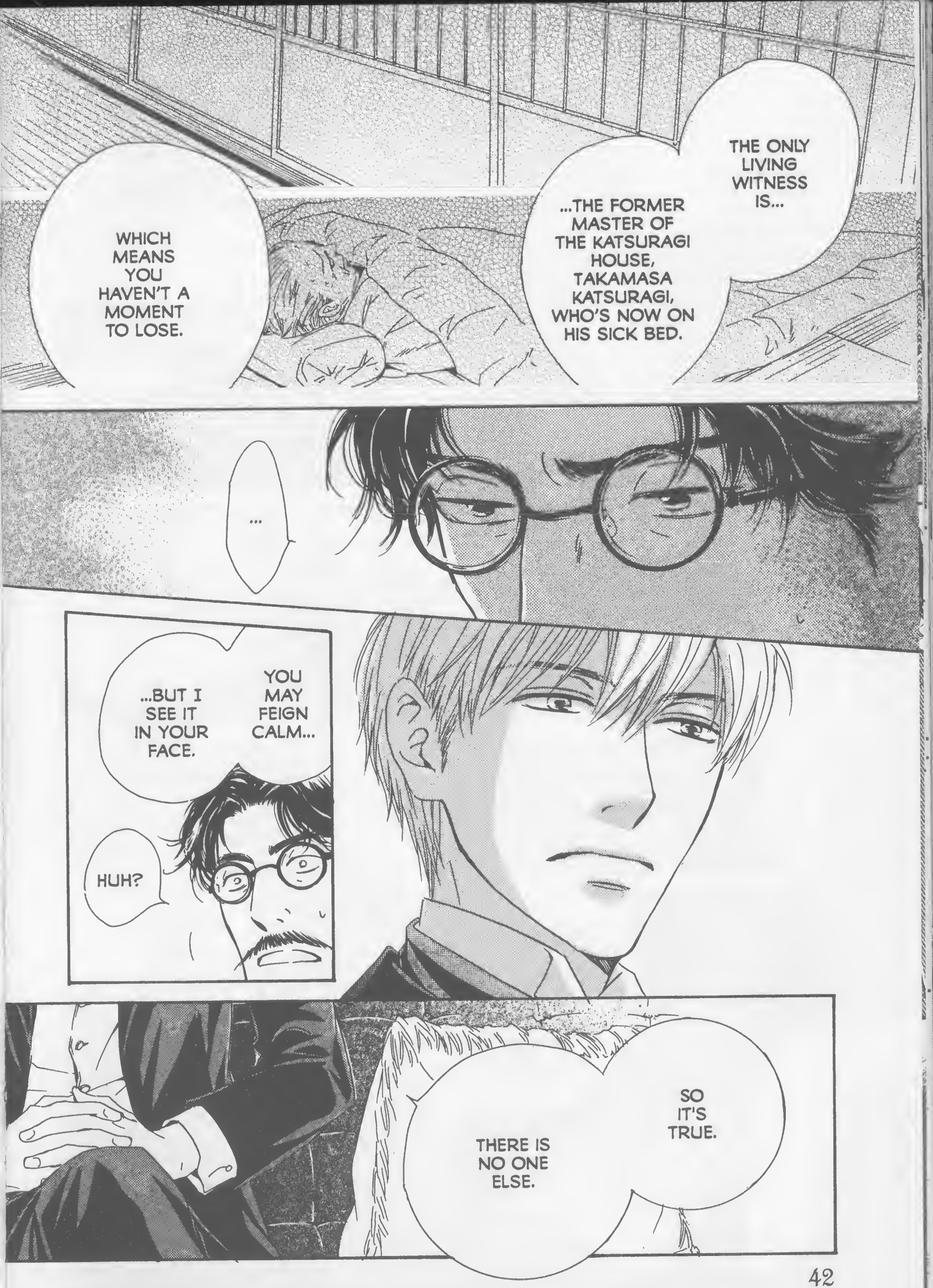

YOU DON'T THINK YOUR RASHNESS CHASED HIM OUT?
...
I UNDERTOOK THIS MATTER WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF MASTER TOMOYUKI...
...
IF THAT'S THE CASE, THEN FINE.
I HAVE NO CENSURE FOR YOU.
WHAT?
AMAMIYA.
IT SEEMS THAT KATSURAGI HAS BECOME THE ISHIZAKIS' HEAD CLERK.

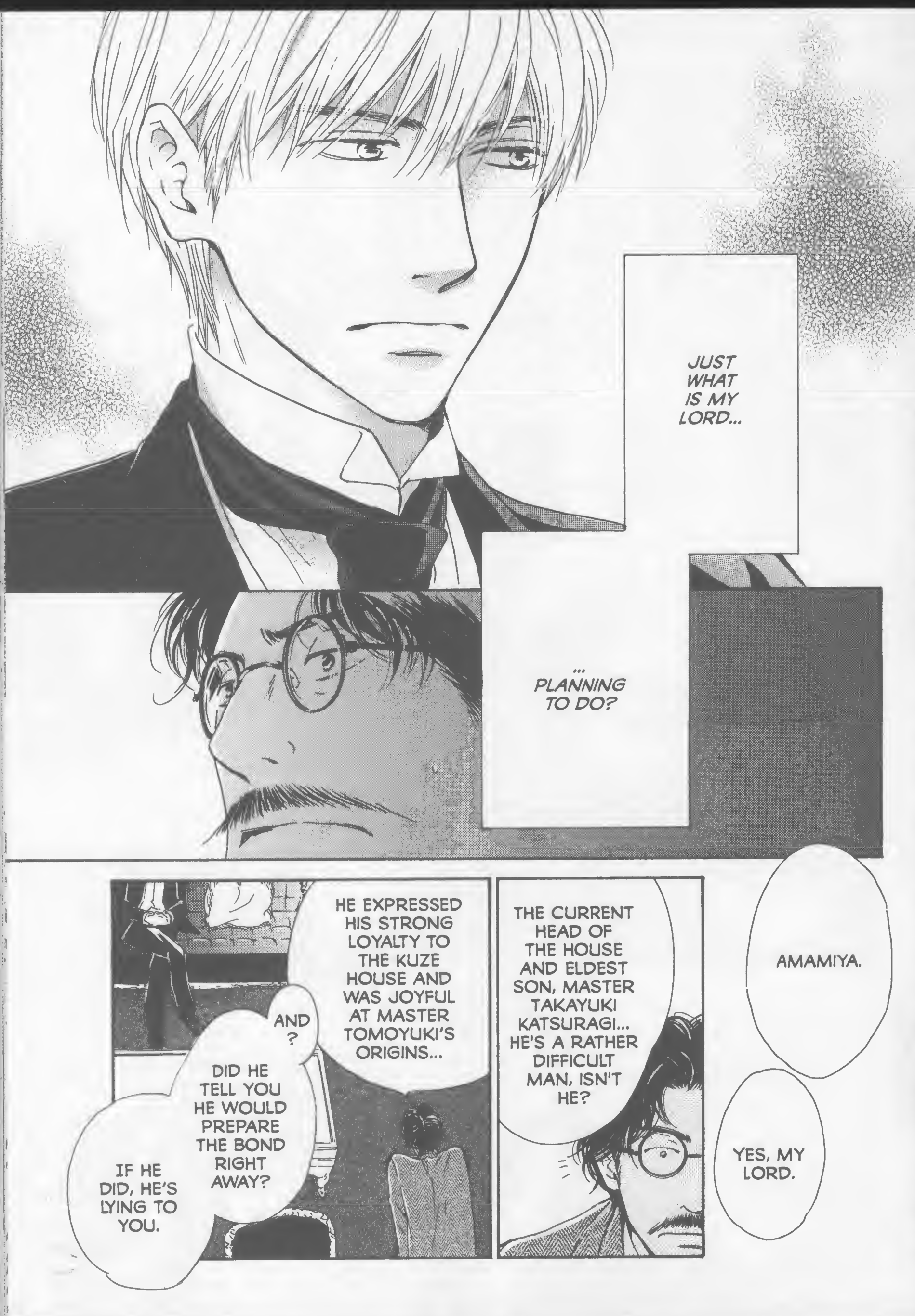

APPARENTLY, THE ISHIZAKIS, BEING THE WEALTHIEST MERCHANTS OF OUR TIME, NEED AS MANY CLERKS AS THEY HAVE BUSINESSES.
ABOVE THEM ALL IS THE HEAD CLERK, WHO REPORTS DIRECTLY TO THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.
DON'T YOU THINK THAT'S QUITE A BIG STEP UP IN THIS WORLD?
IT'S CLEARLY MUCH BETTER THAN BEING A BUTLER TO A VISCOUNT.
AND...
...NORMALLY I'D BE HAPPY FOR HIM ABOUT SUCH AN ACHIEVEMENT.
BUT I CAN'T BE.
WHAT EXACTLY...
...IS MY LORD THINKING?

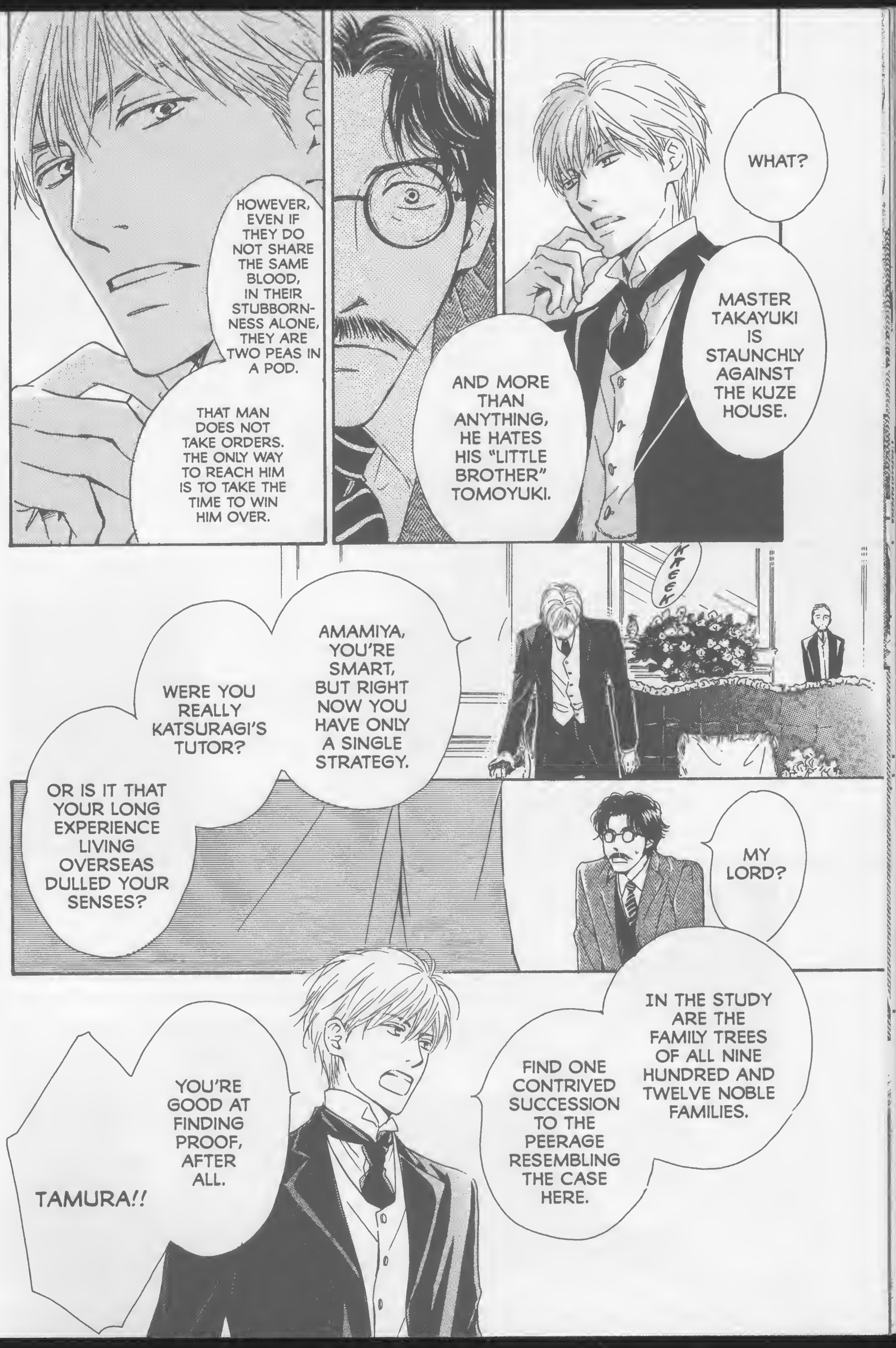

THE KUZE HOUSE IS WHAT GAVE HIM HIS FOUNDATION AND IT IS THE PLACE THAT HE SHOULD CALL HOME.
DON'T YOU AGREE?
ALTHOUGH HE KNOWS THAT I'VE BEEN WORKING TO MAKE MASTER TOMOYUKI HEAD OF THIS HOUSE...
...HE'S NOT ENRAGED. HE MERELY ACCEPTS THE FACTS QUIETLY.
I'M MOST CERTAINLY A TRAITOR.
BEFORE THE RESTORATION, I WOULD'VE HAD TO COMMIT RITUAL SUICIDE.
AMAMIYA.
I'VE TOLD YOU A HUNDRED TIMES NOT TO DISRESPECT MASTER AKIHITO!
MY LORD IS DIFFERENT FROM YOU OR I.
DIFFERENT FROM US AND FROM HIS PREDECESSOR...
MASTER TOMOYUKI.

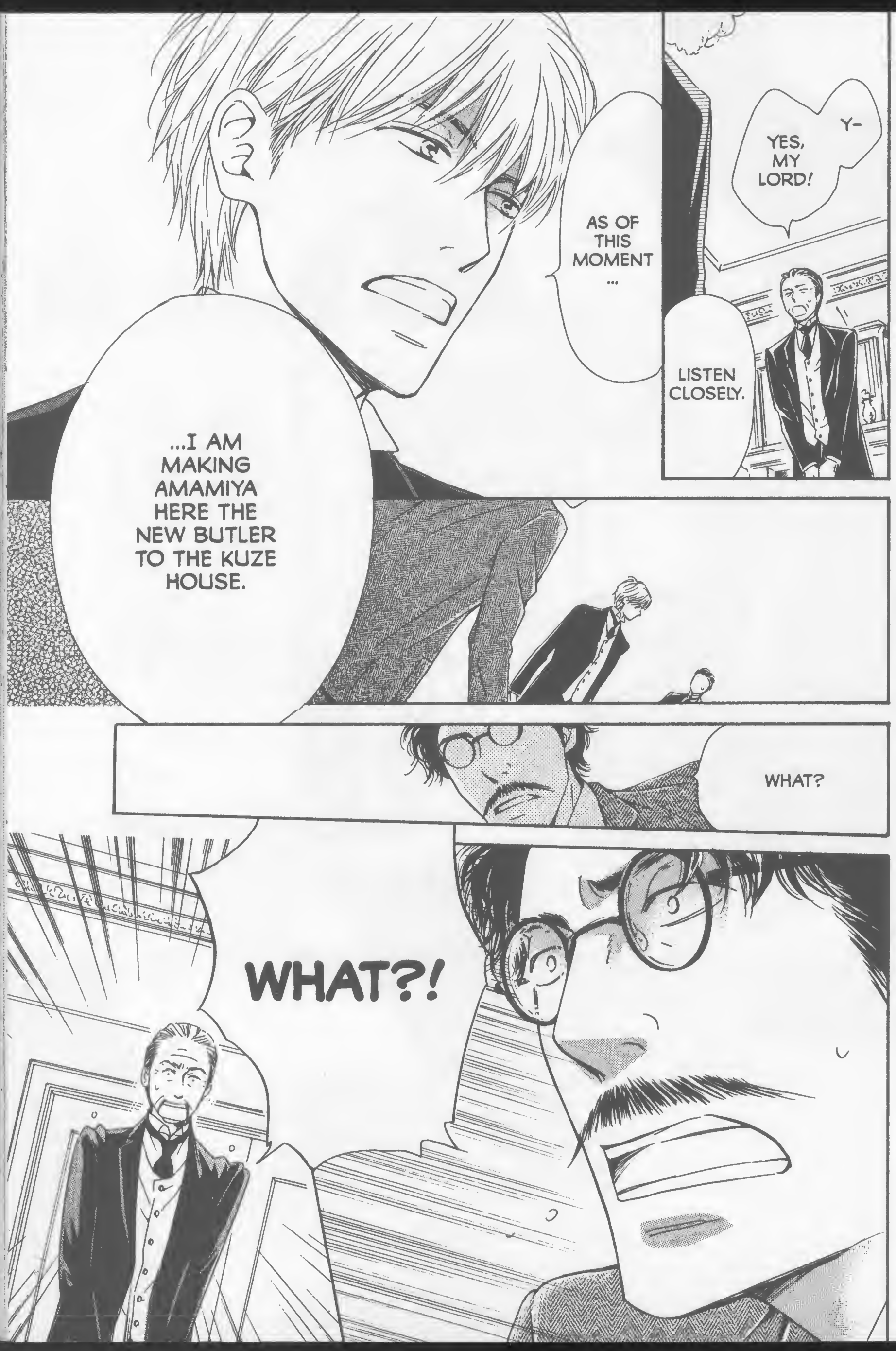

WHAT'S WRONG, AMAMIYA?
AH
I CAN'T SEEM TO...
...READ HIM AT ALL.
...
MY LORD.
BUT...
...PERHAPS IT IS THE SAME FOR HIM?
I CAME HERE TODAY...
...WITH THE FULL INTENTION OF OFFERING YOU MY MOST HUMBLE APOLOGIES FOR MY MISCONDUCT IN THIS MATTER.
THAT DOCUMENT IS A PRECIOUS MEMENTO OF YOUR ANCESTOR, MASTER NAOYA KUZE.
IT IS A DOCUMENT THAT NORMALLY SHOULD REMAIN IN THE POSSESSION OF THE KUZE HOUSE FOR THE REST OF ETERNITY.
HOWEVER...
THE STORY IS VERY DIFFERENT IF THIS DOCUMENT WERE TO BE THE CAUSE OF SOME ENMITY LINGERING BETWEEN MY LORD AND MASTER TOMOYUKI!

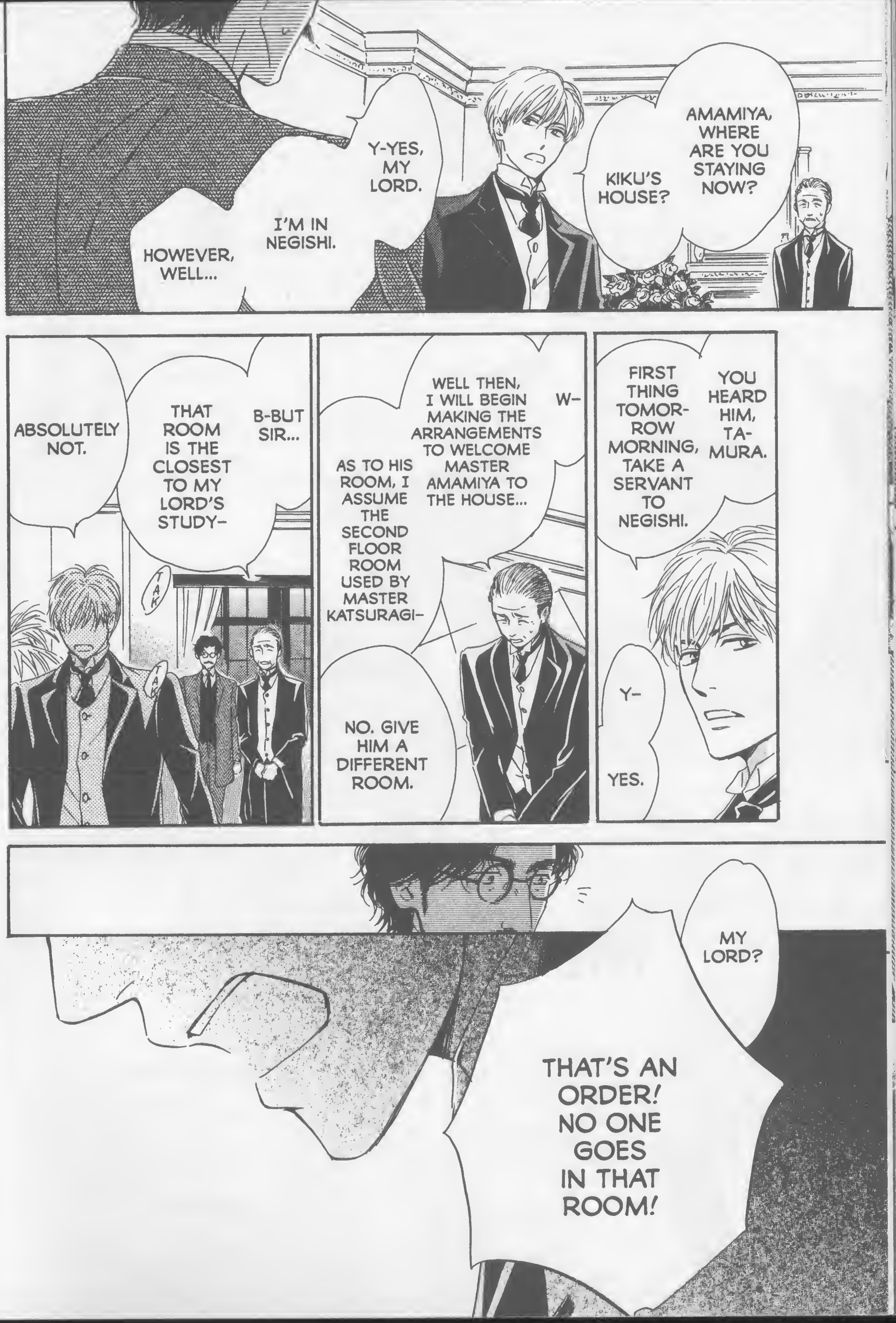

IF IT WERE ENTRUSTED TO ME, THEN EVEN IF IT GOES AGAINST THE WILL OF FORMER LORD NAOYA-
WHICH IS TO SAY...
...YOU WOULD BURN IT AS MY FATHER INSTRUCTED?
CHAK
DROP THIS POINTLESS ACT.
!
THE COPY YOU HAVE IS NO DOUBT A FAKE, IS IT NOT?
!!
AFTER ALL, IT WOULDN'T DO TO HAVE ME CRUSH THE PRECIOUS PROOF JUST AS YOU FINALLY LAID YOUR HANDS ON IT.
AMAMIYA.
...
DON'T YOU THINK THIS HAS ALREADY GONE TO THE NEXT LEVEL?
I UNDERSTAND THAT ONCE YOU OBTAINED THIS COPY, YOU WENT STRAIGHT TO THE KATSURAGI HOUSE.
YOU NEED A WITNESS WHO CAN VERIFY YOUR COPY IS THE REAL THING.
IN WHICH CASE...

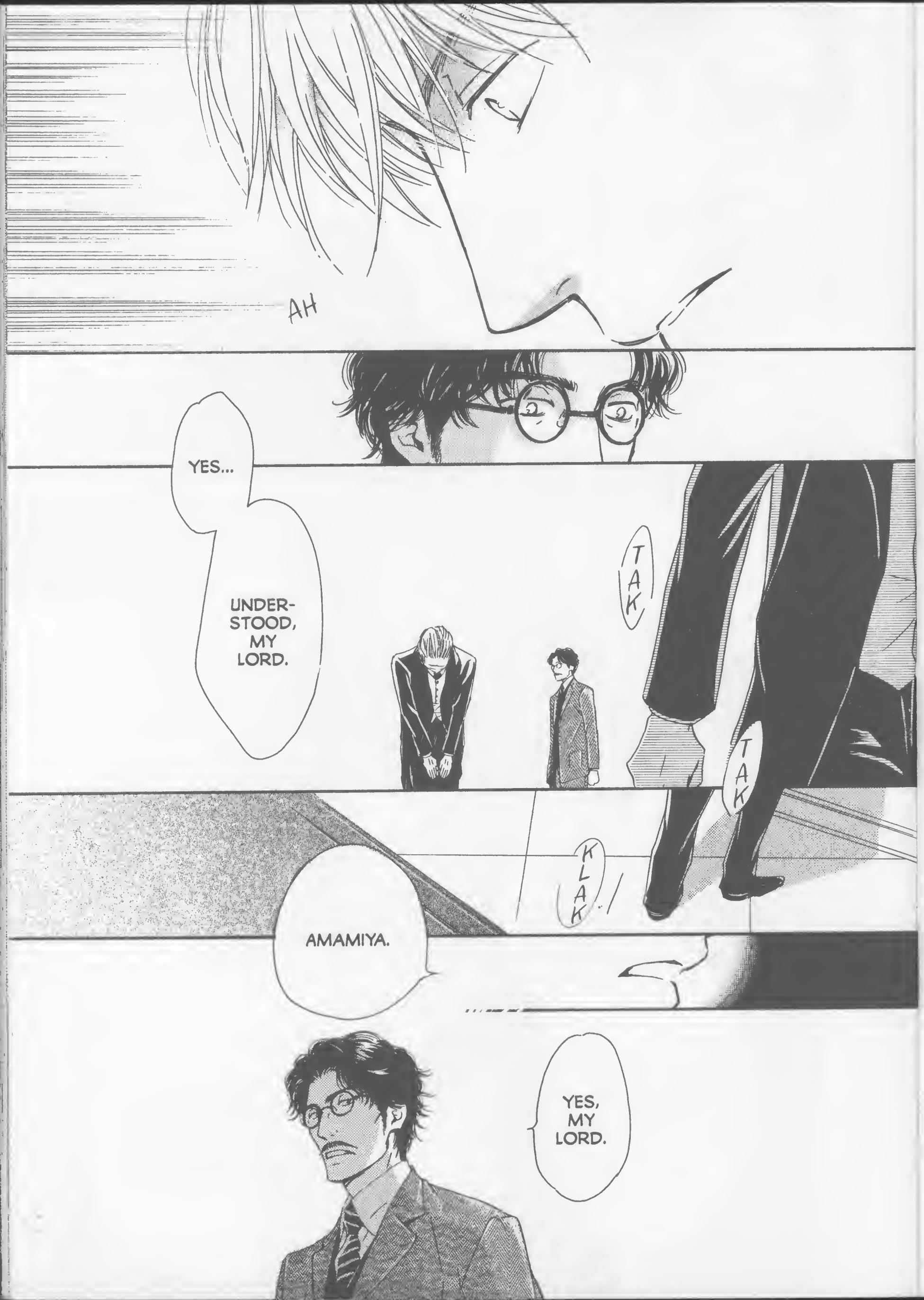

THE ONLY LIVING WITNESS IS...
...THE FORMER MASTER OF THE KATSURAGI HOUSE, TAKAMASA KATSURAGI, WHO'S NOW ON HIS SICK BED.
WHICH MEANS YOU HAVEN'T A MOMENT TO LOSE.
...
YOU MAY FEIGN CALM...
...BUT I SEE IT IN YOUR FACE.
HUH?
SO IT'S TRUE.
THERE IS NO ONE ELSE.

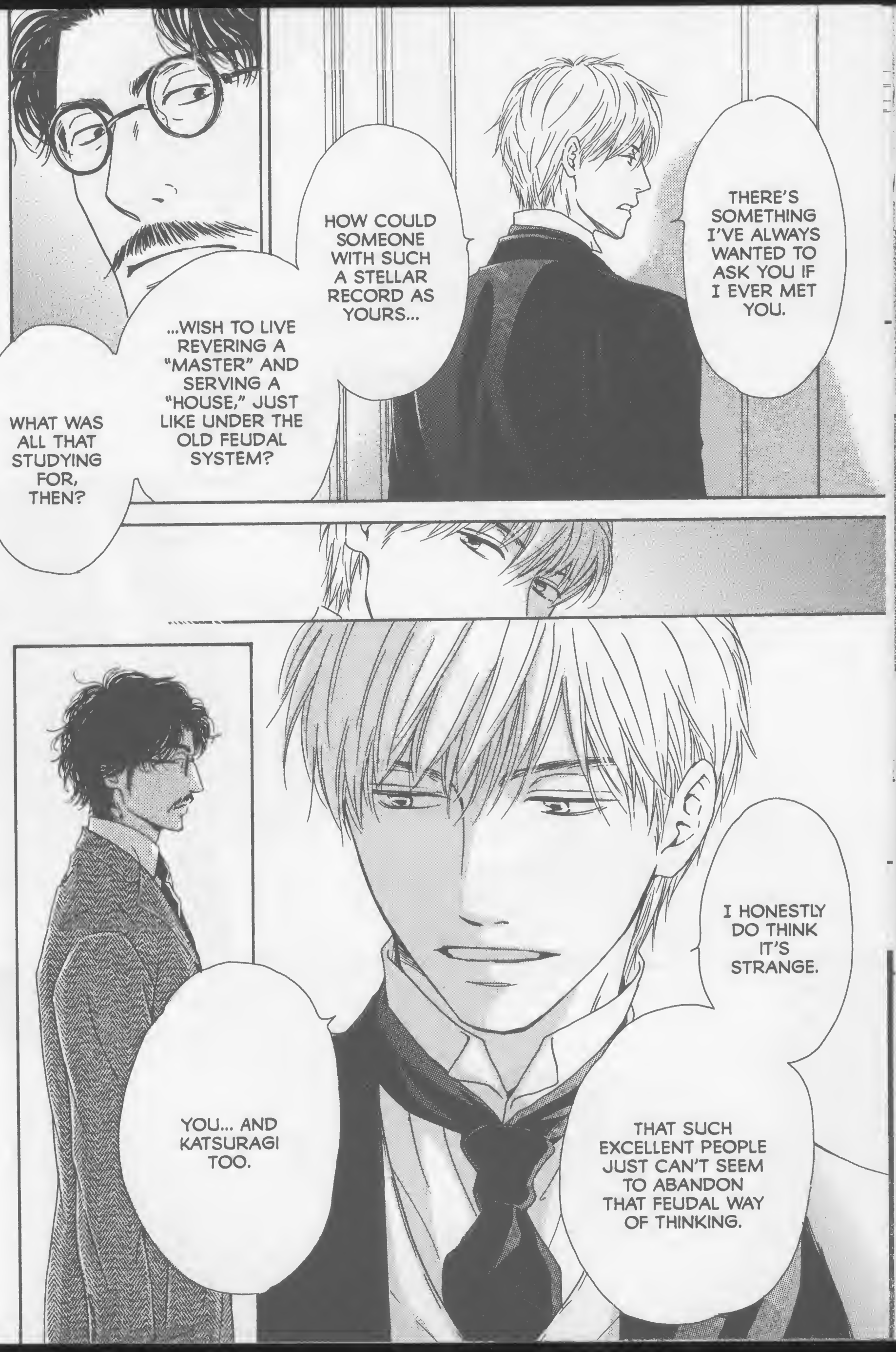

JUST WHAT IS MY LORD...
... PLANNING TO DO?
AMAMIYA.
YES, MY LORD.
THE CURRENT HEAD OF THE HOUSE AND ELDEST SON, MASTER TAKAYUKI KATSURAGI... HE'S A RATHER DIFFICULT MAN, ISN'T HE?
HE EXPRESSED HIS STRONG LOYALTY TO THE KUZE HOUSE AND WAS JOYFUL AT MASTER TOMOYUKI'S ORIGINS...
AND?
DID HE TELL YOU HE WOULD PREPARE THE BOND RIGHT AWAY?
IF HE DID, HE'S LYING TO YOU.

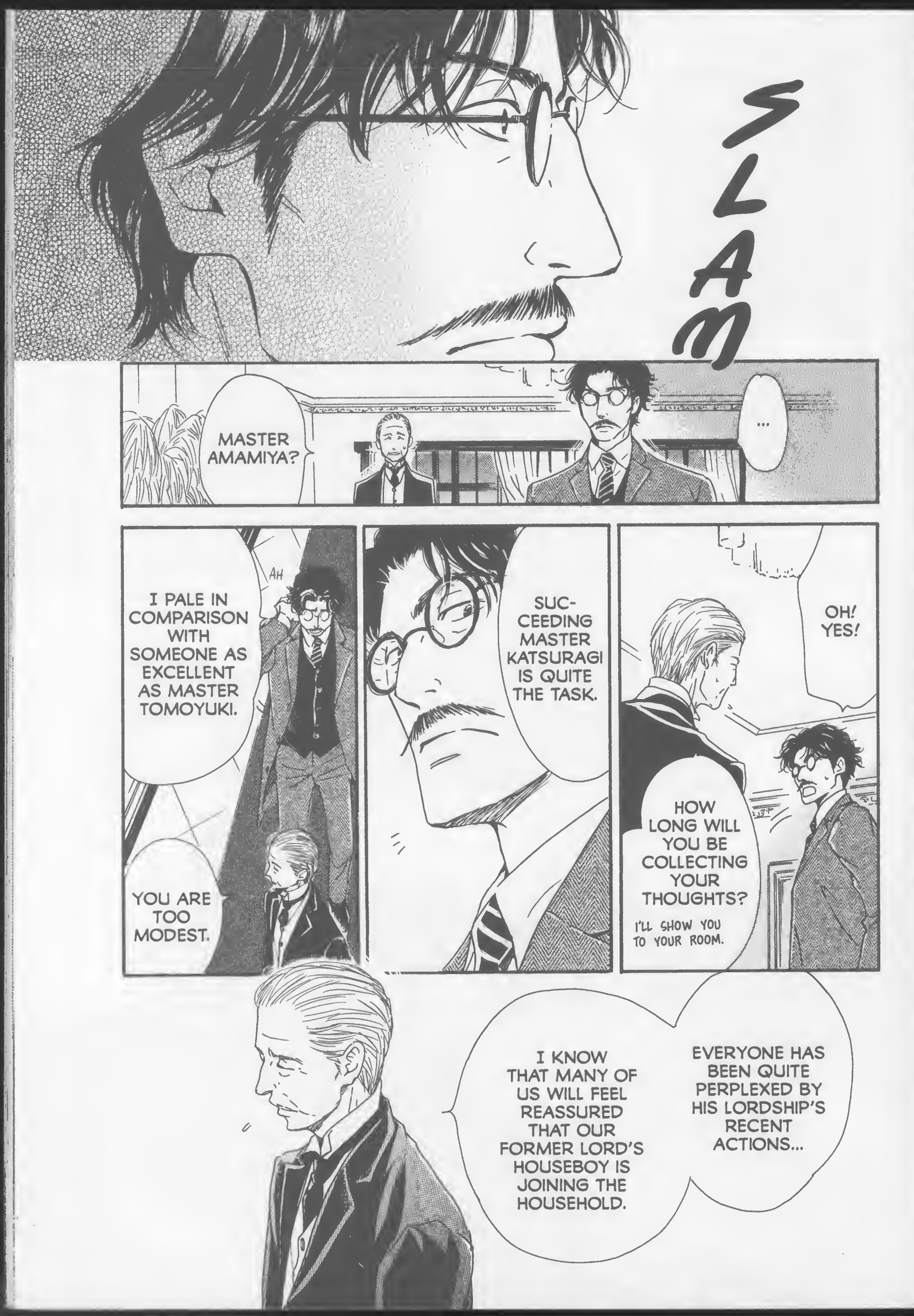

WHAT?
MASTER TAKAYUKI IS STAUNCHLY AGAINST THE KUZE HOUSE.
AND MORE THAN ANYTHING, HE HATES HIS "LITTLE BROTHER" TOMOYUKI.
HOWEVER, EVEN IF THEY DO NOT SHARE THE SAME BLOOD, IN THEIR STUBBORNNESS ALONE, THEY ARE TWO PEAS IN A POD.
THAT MAN DOES NOT TAKE ORDERS. THE ONLY WAY TO REACH HIM IS TO TAKE THE TIME TO WIN HIM OVER.
KREEK
AMAMIYA, YOU'RE SMART, BUT RIGHT NOW YOU HAVE ONLY A SINGLE STRATEGY.
WERE YOU REALLY KATSURAGI'S TUTOR?
OR IS IT THAT YOUR LONG EXPERIENCE LIVING OVERSEAS DULLED YOUR SENSES?
MY LORD?
IN THE STUDY ARE THE FAMILY TREES OF ALL NINE HUNDRED AND TWELVE NOBLE FAMILIES.
FIND ONE CONTRIVED SUCCESSION TO THE PEERAGE RESEMBLING THE CASE HERE.
YOU'RE GOOD AT FINDING PROOF, AFTER ALL.
TAMURA!!

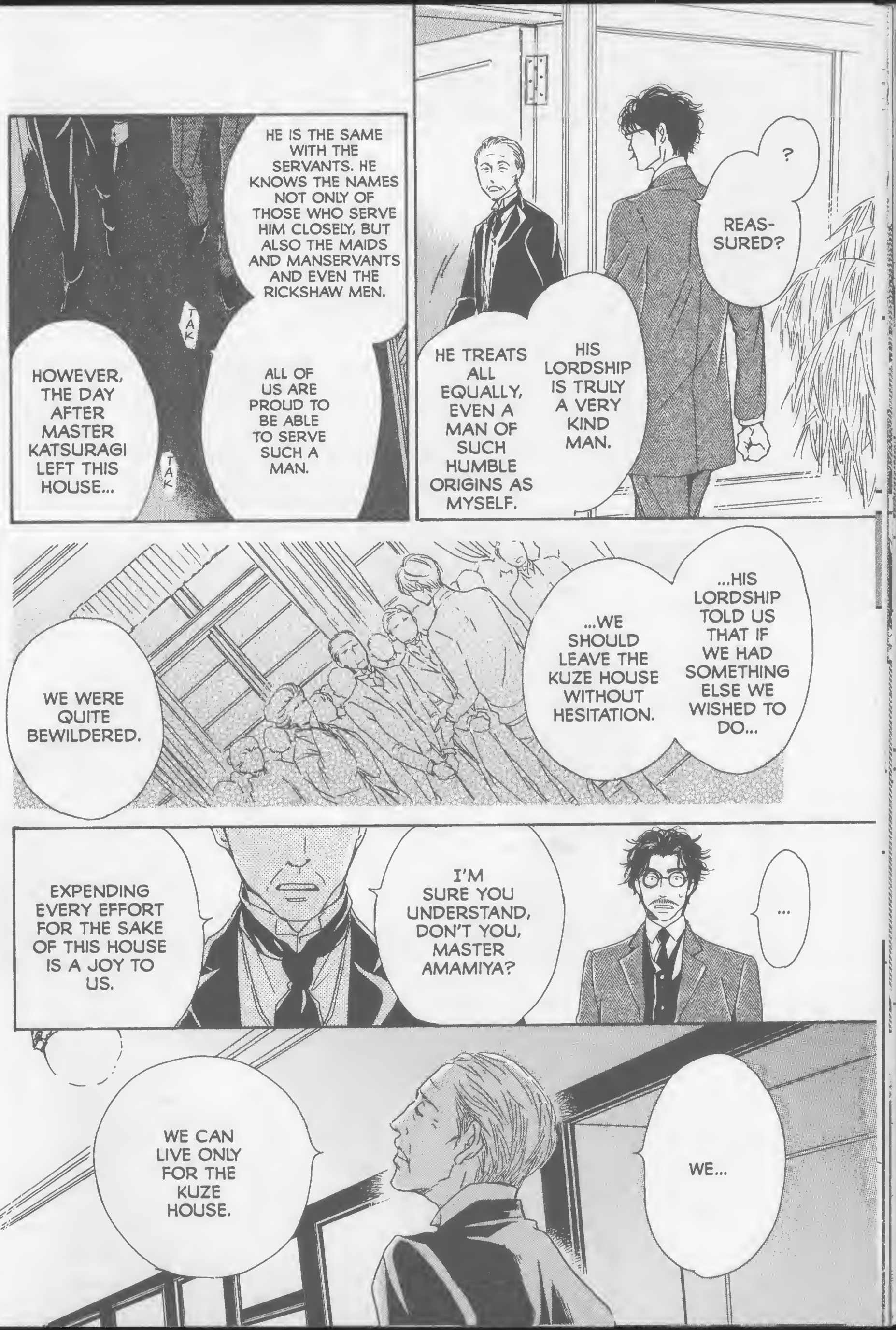

Y-
YES, MY LORD!
LISTEN CLOSELY.
AS OF THIS MOMENT ...
...I AM MAKING AMAMIYA HERE THE NEW BUTLER TO THE KUZE HOUSE.
WHAT?
WHAT?!

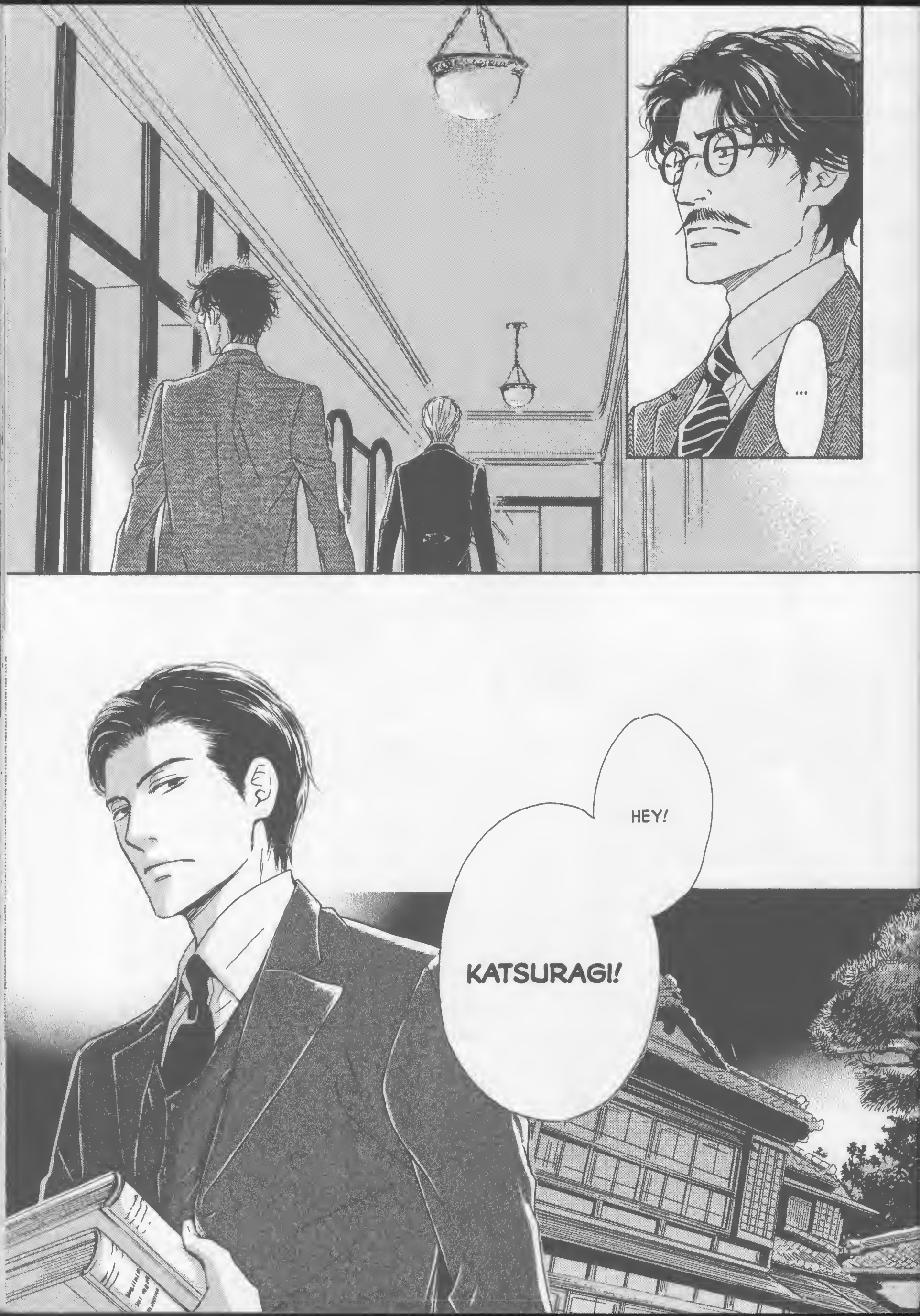

AMAMIYA, WHERE ARE YOU STAYING NOW?
KIKU'S HOUSE?
Y-YES, MY LORD.
I'M IN NEGISHI.
HOWEVER, WELL...
YOU HEARD HIM, TAMURA.
FIRST THING TOMORROW MORNING, TAKE A SERVANT TO NEGISHI.
Y-
YES.
W-
WELL THEN, I WILL BEGIN MAKING THE ARRANGEMENTS TO WELCOME MASTER AMAMIYA TO THE HOUSE...
AS TO HIS ROOM, I ASSUME THE SECOND FLOOR ROOM USED BY MASTER KATSURAGI–
NO. GIVE HIM A DIFFERENT ROOM.
B-BUT SIR...
THAT ROOM IS THE CLOSEST TO MY LORD'S STUDY–
ABSOLUTELY NOT.
TAK
MY LORD?
THAT'S AN ORDER! NO ONE GOES IN THAT ROOM!

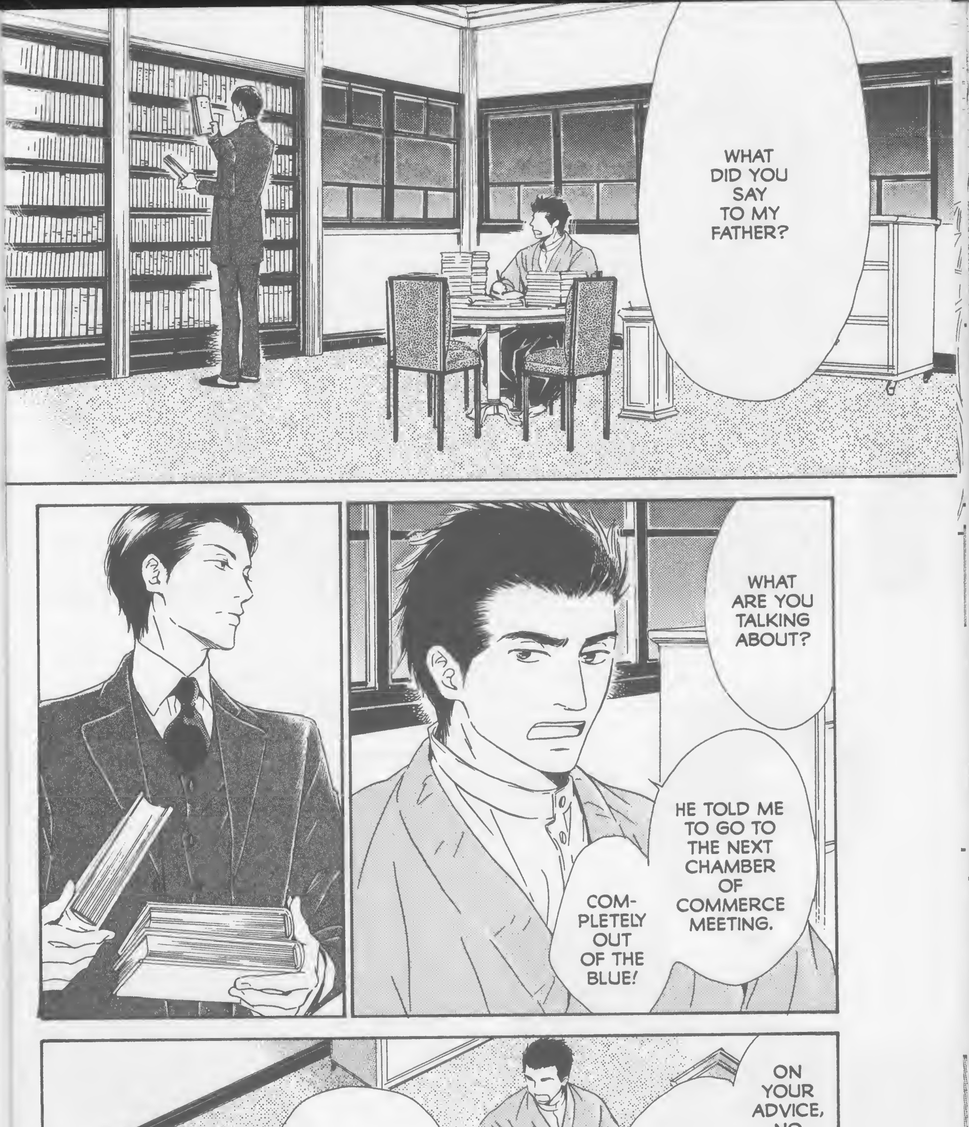

AH
YES...
UNDERSTOOD, MY LORD.
TAK
TAK
KLAK
AMAMIYA.
YES, MY LORD.

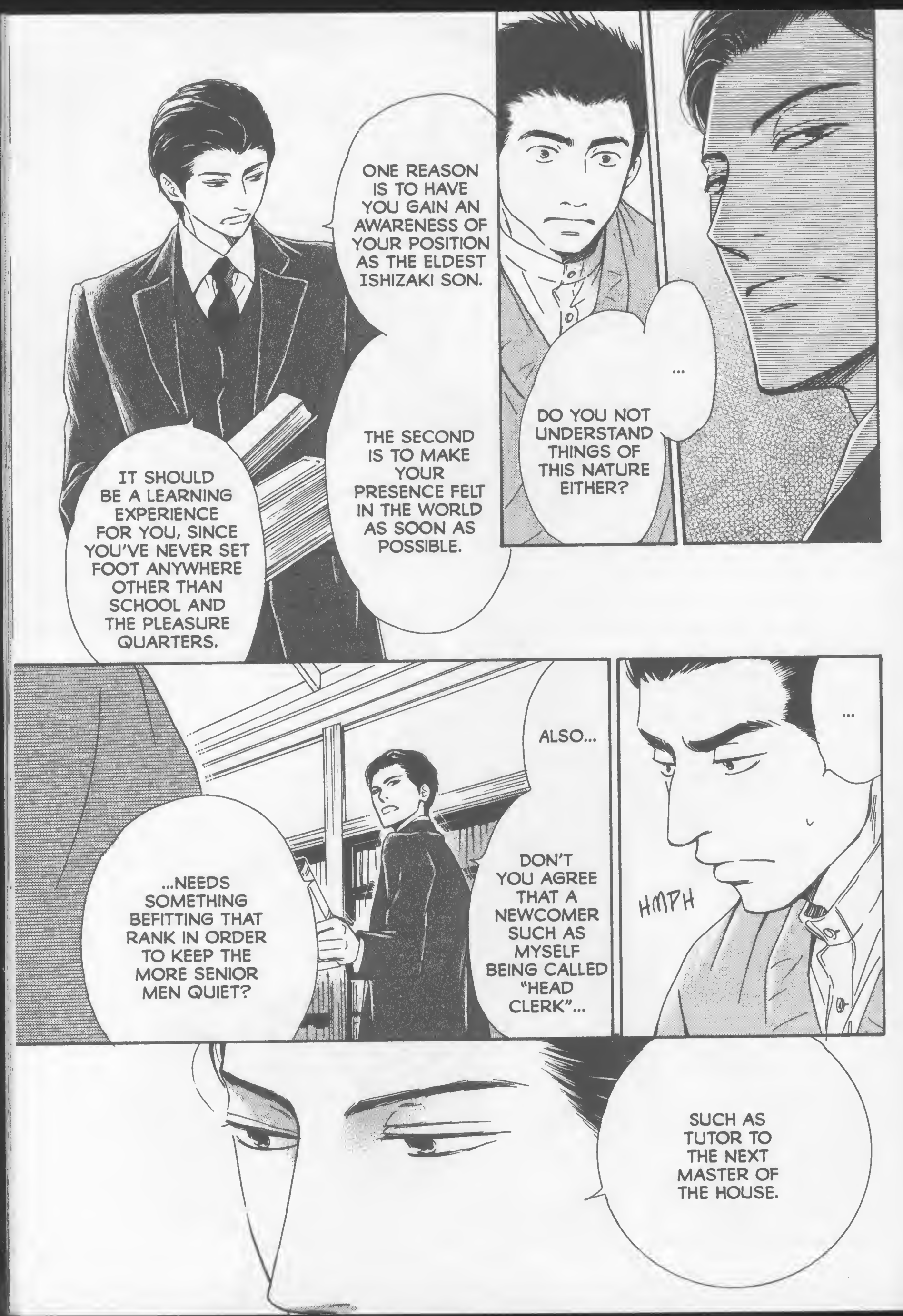

THERE'S SOMETHING I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO ASK YOU IF I EVER MET YOU.
HOW COULD SOMEONE WITH SUCH A STELLAR RECORD AS YOURS...
...WISH TO LIVE REVERING A "MASTER" AND SERVING A "HOUSE," JUST LIKE UNDER THE OLD FEUDAL SYSTEM?
WHAT WAS ALL THAT STUDYING FOR, THEN?
I HONESTLY DO THINK IT'S STRANGE.
THAT SUCH EXCELLENT PEOPLE JUST CAN'T SEEM TO ABANDON THAT FEUDAL WAY OF THINKING.
YOU... AND KATSURAGI TOO.

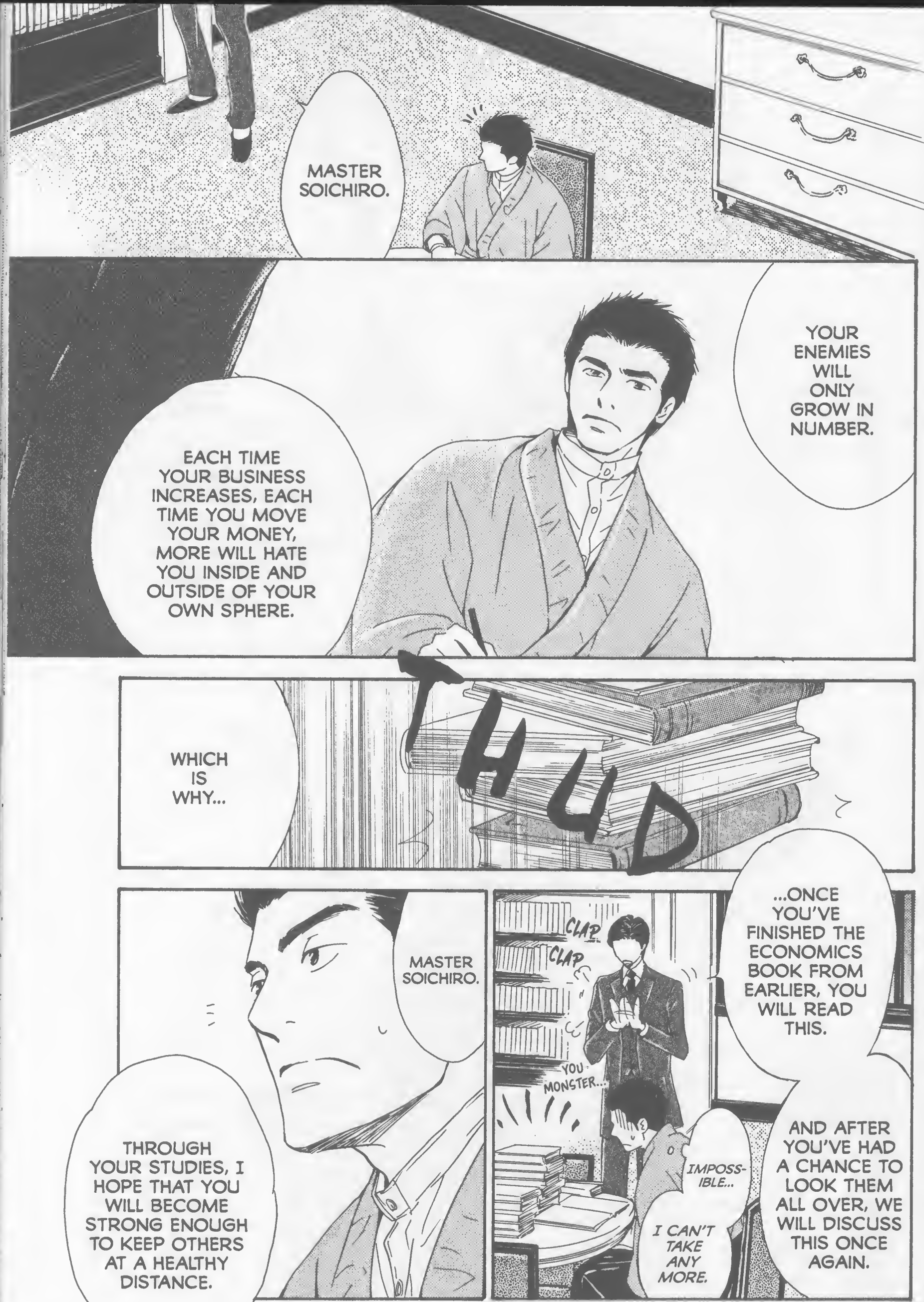

SLAM
...
MASTER AMAMIYA?
OH! YES!
HOW LONG WILL YOU BE COLLECTING YOUR THOUGHTS?
I'LL SHOW YOU TO YOUR ROOM.
SUC-CEEDING MASTER KATSURAGI IS QUITE THE TASK.
AH
I PALE IN COMPARISON WITH SOMEONE AS EXCELLENT AS MASTER TOMOYUKI.
YOU ARE TOO MODEST.
EVERYONE HAS BEEN QUITE PERPLEXED BY HIS LORDSHIP'S RECENT ACTIONS...
I KNOW THAT MANY OF US WILL FEEL REASSURED THAT OUR FORMER LORD'S HOUSEBOY IS JOINING THE HOUSEHOLD.

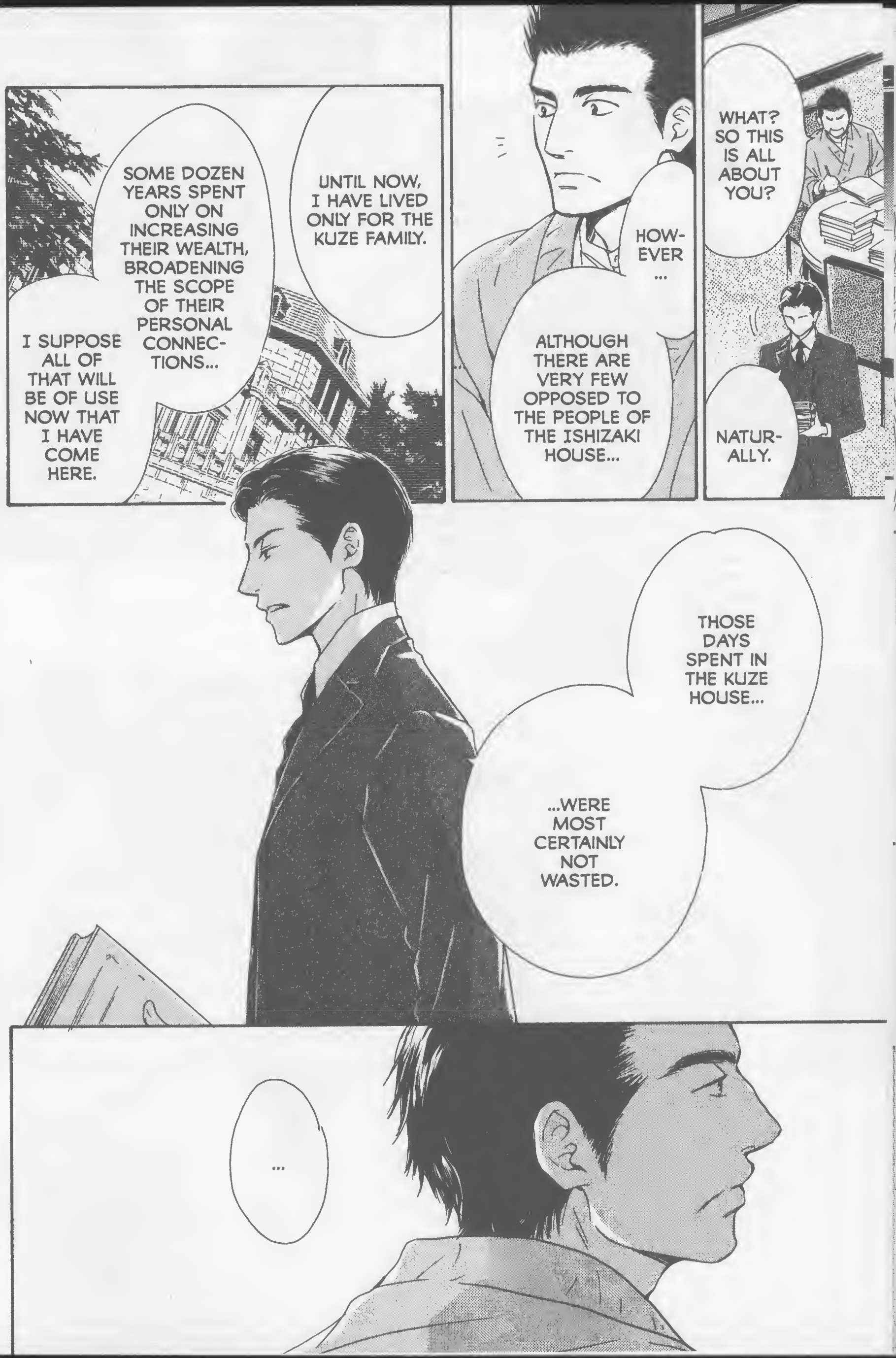

?
REASSURED?
HIS LORDSHIP IS TRULY A VERY KIND MAN.
HE TREATS ALL EQUALLY, EVEN A MAN OF SUCH HUMBLE ORIGINS AS MYSELF.
HE IS THE SAME WITH THE SERVANTS. HE KNOWS THE NAMES NOT ONLY OF THOSE WHO SERVE HIM CLOSELY, BUT ALSO THE MAIDS AND MANSERVANTS AND EVEN THE RICKSHAW MEN.
TAK
ALL OF US ARE PROUD TO BE ABLE TO SERVE SUCH A MAN.
TAK
HOWEVER, THE DAY AFTER MASTER KATSURAGI LEFT THIS HOUSE...
...HIS LORDSHIP TOLD US THAT IF WE HAD SOMETHING ELSE WE WISHED TO DO...
...WE SHOULD LEAVE THE KUZE HOUSE WITHOUT HESITATION.
WE WERE QUITE BEWILDERED.
...
I'M SURE YOU UNDERSTAND, DON'T YOU, MASTER AMAMIYA?
EXPENDING EVERY EFFORT FOR THE SAKE OF THIS HOUSE IS A JOY TO US.
WE...
WE CAN LIVE ONLY FOR THE KUZE HOUSE.

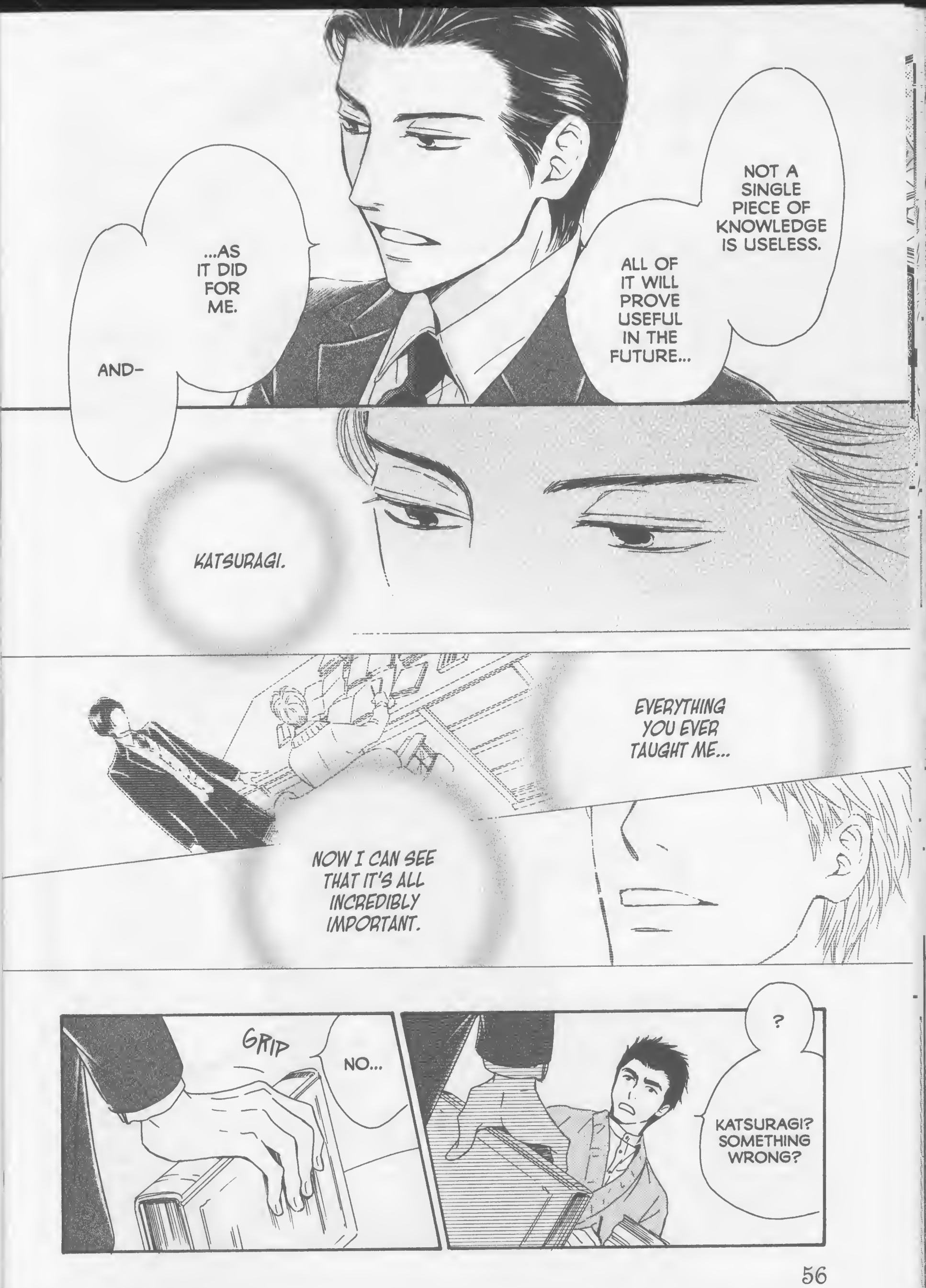

...
HEY!
KATSURAGI!

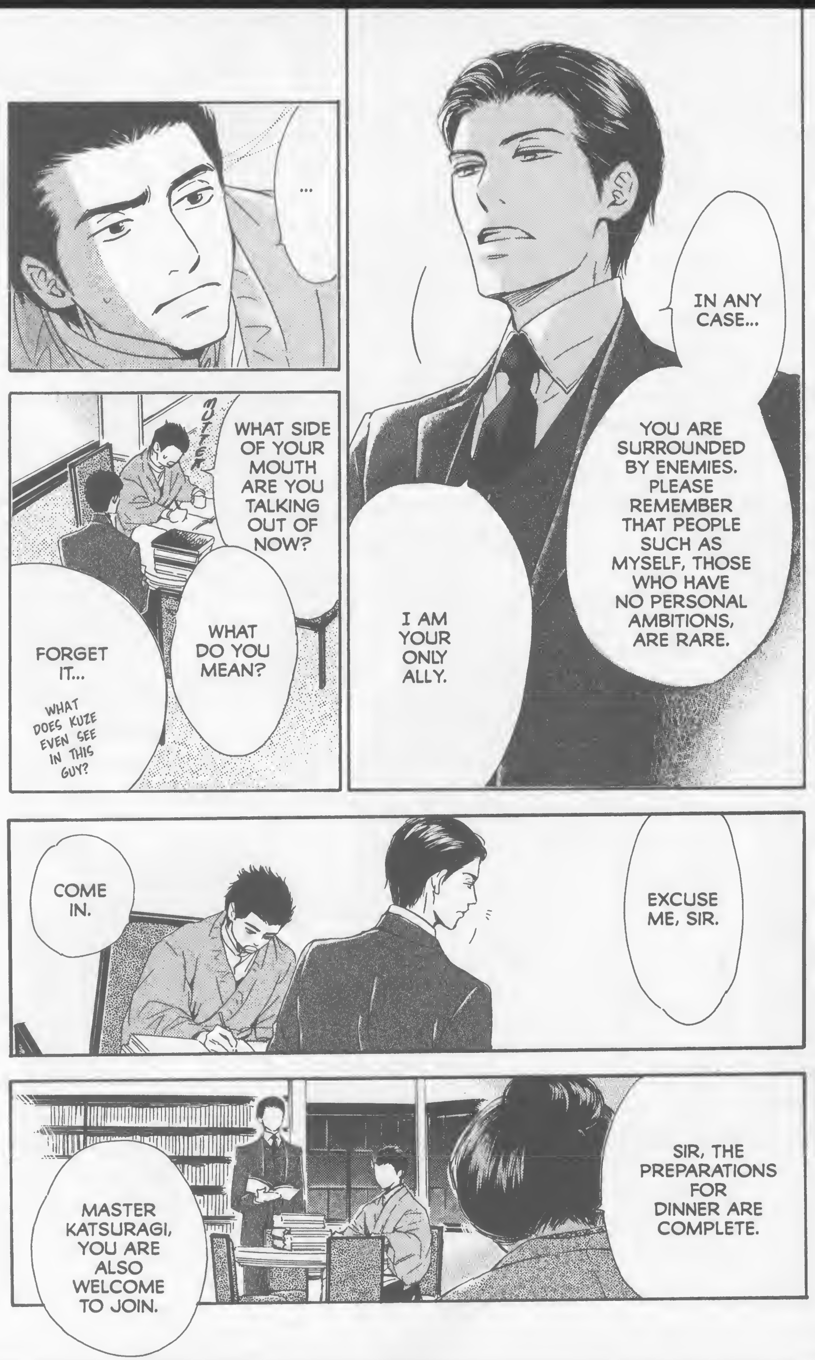

WHAT DID YOU SAY TO MY FATHER?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
HE TOLD ME TO GO TO THE NEXT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MEETING.
COMPLETELY OUT OF THE BLUE!
HE'S NEVER ONCE TALKED TO ME ABOUT BUSINESS.
AND THEN YOU COME ALONG AND HE GETS RIDICULOUSLY STRICT!
ON YOUR ADVICE, NO DOUBT.

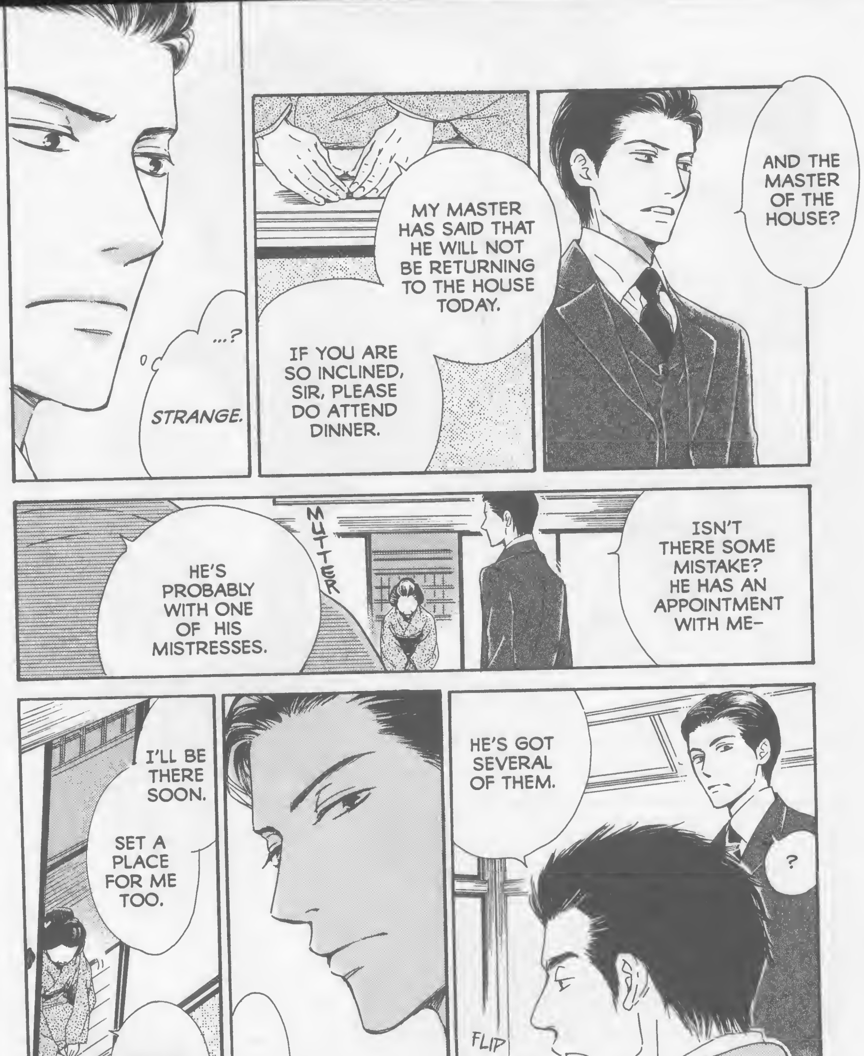

...
DO YOU NOT UNDERSTAND THINGS OF THIS NATURE EITHER?
ONE REASON IS TO HAVE YOU GAIN AN AWARENESS OF YOUR POSITION AS THE ELDEST ISHIZAKI SON.
THE SECOND IS TO MAKE YOUR PRESENCE FELT IN THE WORLD AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
IT SHOULD BE A LEARNING EXPERIENCE FOR YOU, SINCE YOU'VE NEVER SET FOOT ANYWHERE OTHER THAN SCHOOL AND THE PLEASURE QUARTERS.
...
HMPH
ALSO...
DON'T YOU AGREE THAT A NEWCOMER SUCH AS MYSELF BEING CALLED "HEAD CLERK"...
...NEEDS SOMETHING BEFITTING THAT RANK IN ORDER TO KEEP THE MORE SENIOR MEN QUIET?
SUCH AS TUTOR TO THE NEXT MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

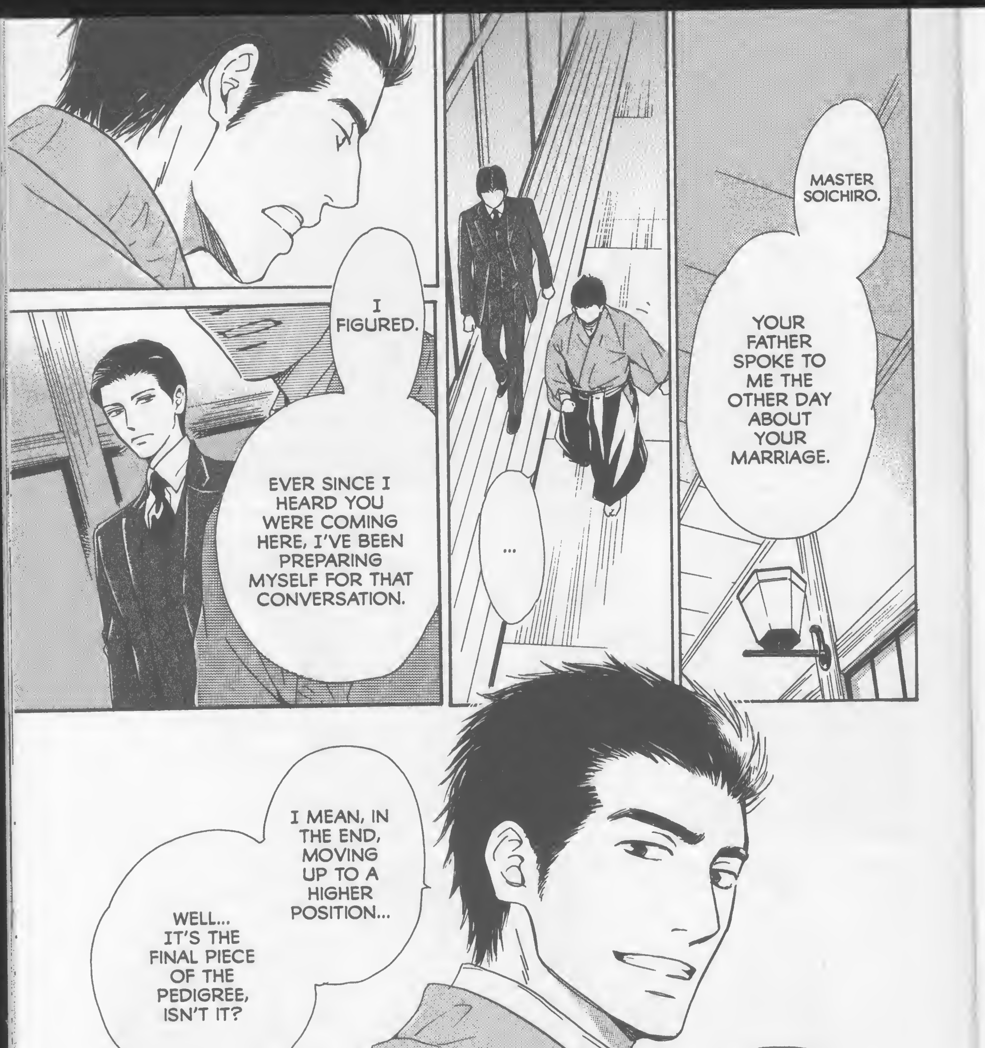

MASTER SOICHIRO.
YOUR ENEMIES WILL ONLY GROW IN NUMBER.
EACH TIME YOUR BUSINESS INCREASES, EACH TIME YOU MOVE YOUR MONEY, MORE WILL HATE YOU INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF YOUR OWN SPHERE.
WHICH IS WHY...
THUD
MASTER SOICHIRO.
THROUGH YOUR STUDIES, I HOPE THAT YOU WILL BECOME STRONG ENOUGH TO KEEP OTHERS AT A HEALTHY DISTANCE.
CLAP CLAP
...ONCE YOU'VE FINISHED THE ECONOMICS BOOK FROM EARLIER, YOU WILL READ THIS.
AND AFTER YOU'VE HAD A CHANCE TO LOOK THEM ALL OVER, WE WILL DISCUSS THIS ONCE AGAIN.
YOU MONSTER...
IMPOSSIBLE...
I CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE.

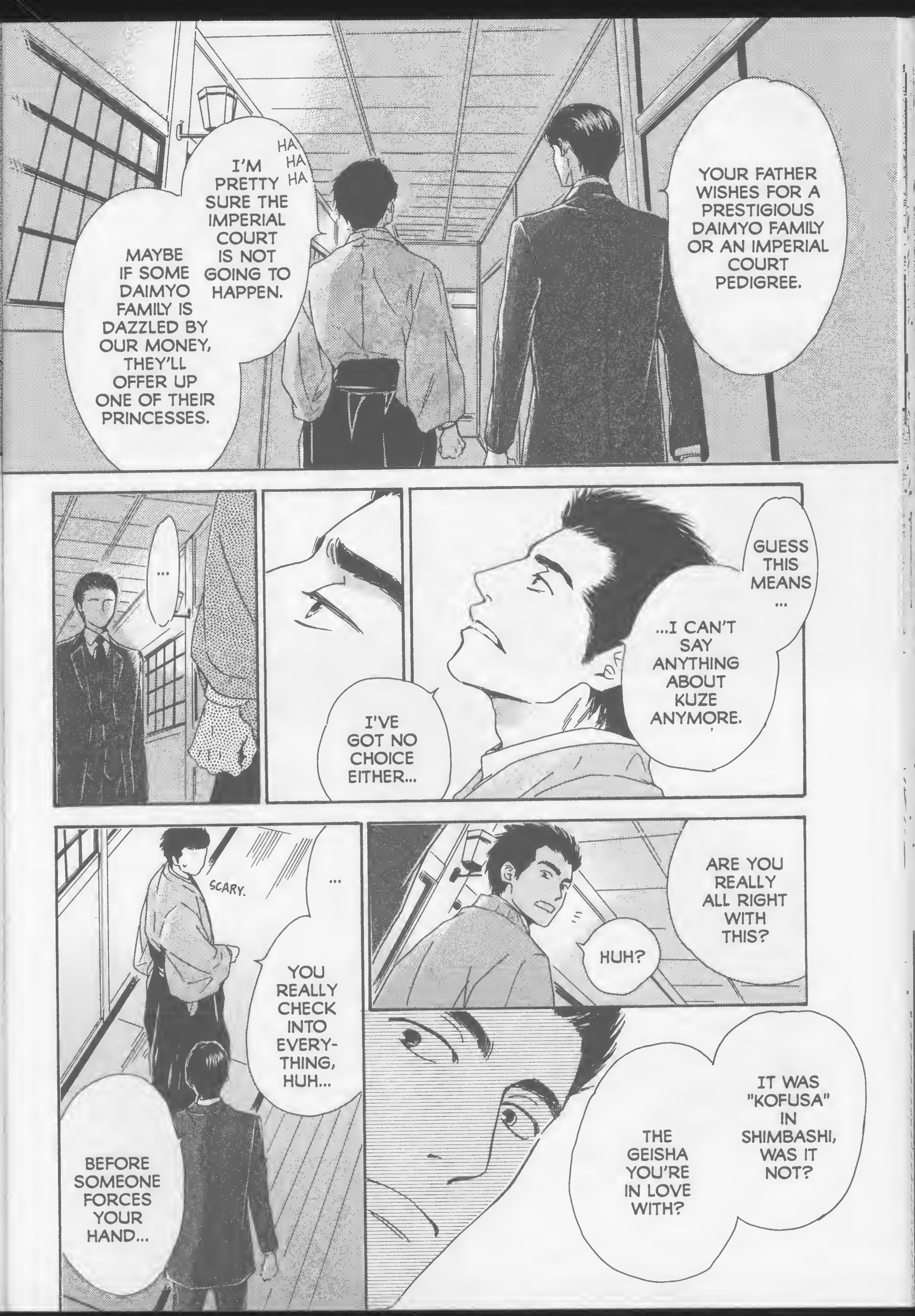

UNTIL NOW, I HAVE LIVED ONLY FOR THE KUZE FAMILY.
SOME DOZEN YEARS SPENT ONLY ON INCREASING THEIR WEALTH, BROADENING THE SCOPE OF THEIR PERSONAL CONNECTIONS...
I SUPPOSE ALL OF THAT WILL BE OF USE NOW THAT I HAVE COME HERE.
HOWEVER...
ALTHOUGH THERE ARE VERY FEW OPPOSED TO THE PEOPLE OF THE ISHIZAKI HOUSE...
WHAT? SO THIS IS ALL ABOUT YOU?
NATURALLY.
THOSE DAYS SPENT IN THE KUZE HOUSE...
...WERE MOST CERTAINLY NOT WASTED.
...

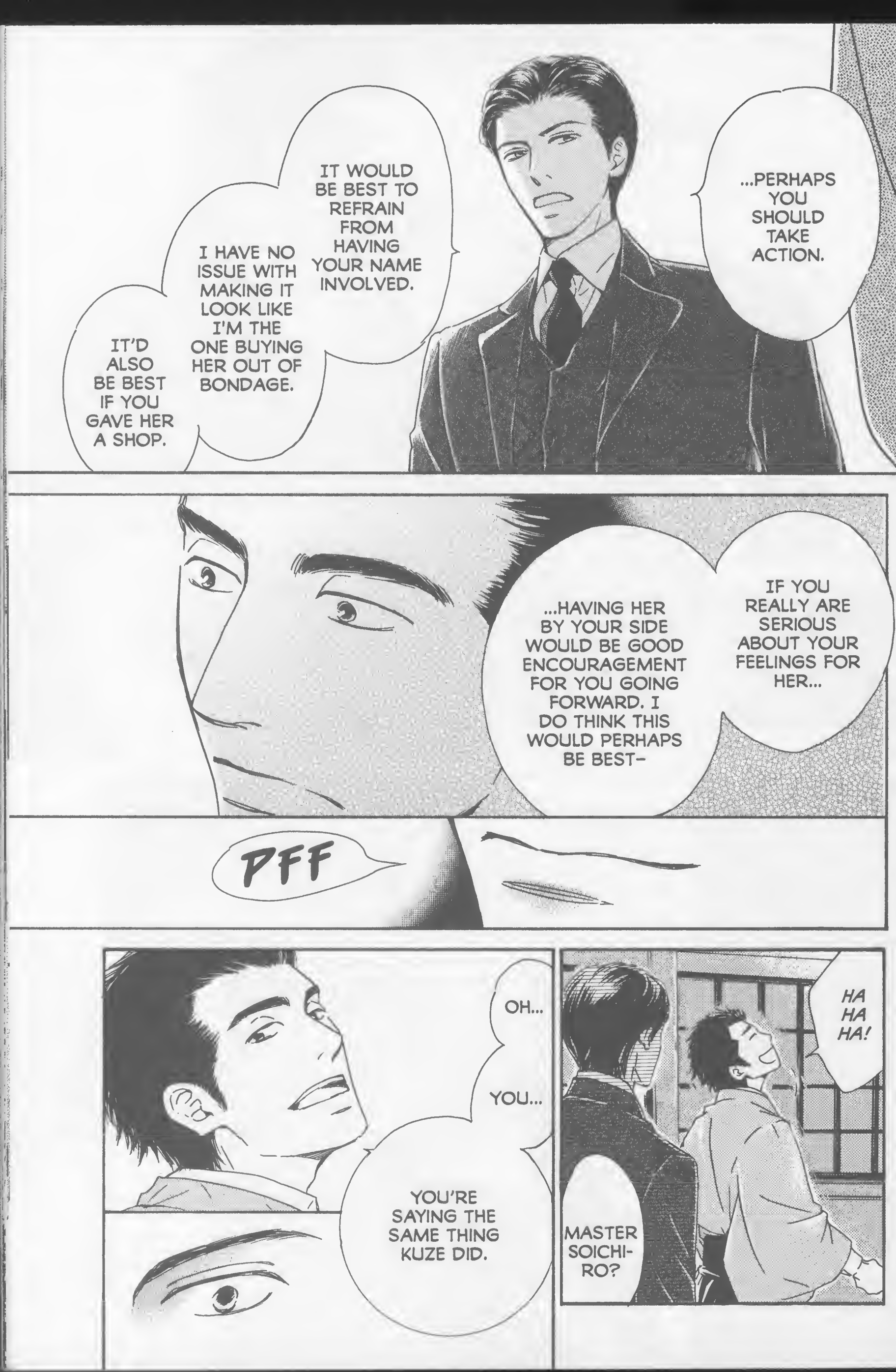

NOT A SINGLE PIECE OF KNOWLEDGE IS USELESS.
ALL OF IT WILL PROVE USEFUL IN THE FUTURE...
...AS IT DID FOR ME.
AND-
KATSURAGI.
EVERYTHING YOU EVER TAUGHT ME...
NOW I CAN SEE THAT IT'S ALL INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT.
?
KATSURAGI? SOMETHING WRONG?
GRIP
NO...

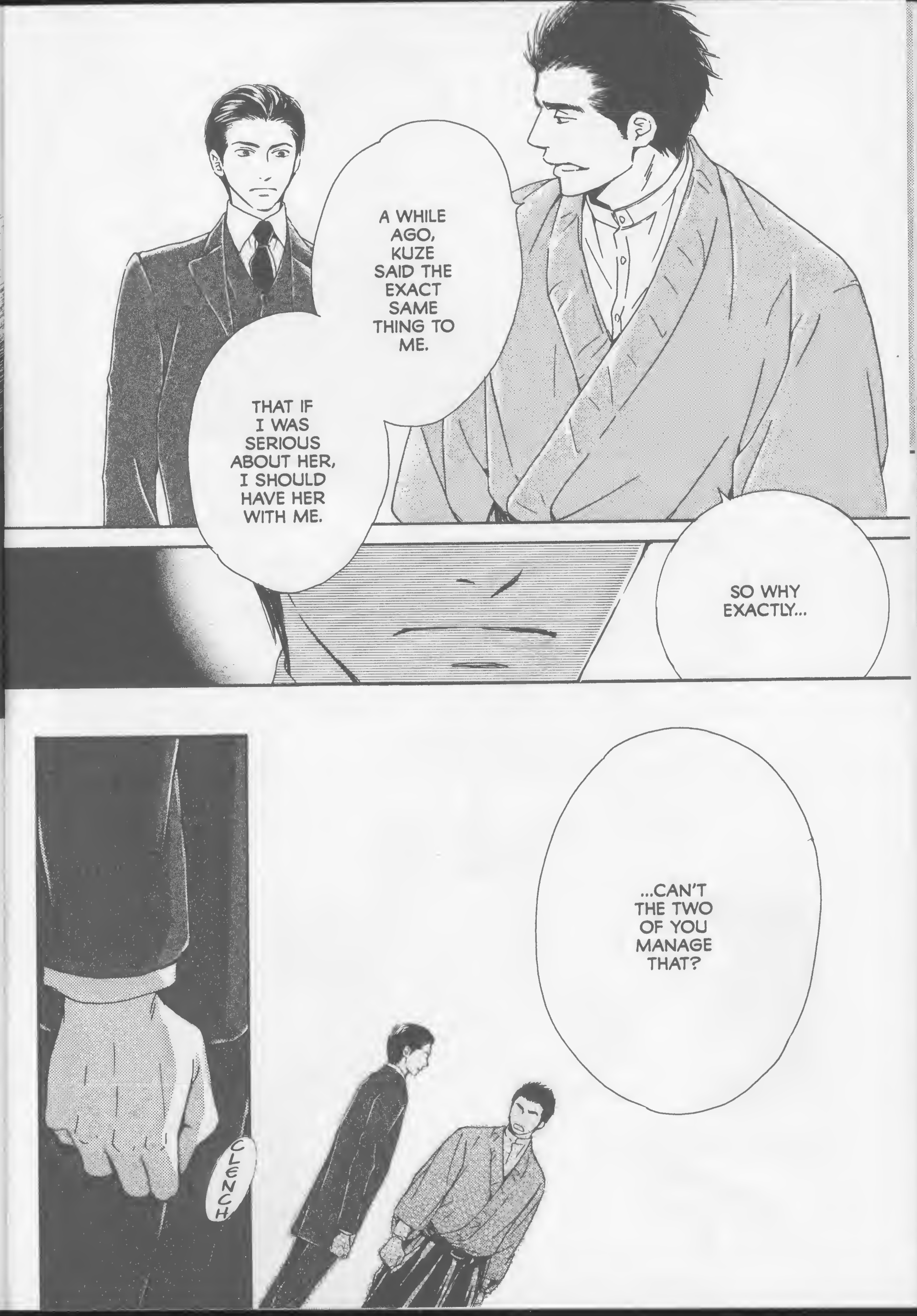

IN ANY CASE...
YOU ARE SURROUNDED BY ENEMIES. PLEASE REMEMBER THAT PEOPLE SUCH AS MYSELF, THOSE WHO HAVE NO PERSONAL AMBITIONS, ARE RARE.
I AM YOUR ONLY ALLY.
...
MUTTER
WHAT SIDE OF YOUR MOUTH ARE YOU TALKING OUT OF NOW?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
FORGET IT...
WHAT DOES KUZE EVEN SEE IN THIS GUY?
EXCUSE ME, SIR.
COME IN.
SIR, THE PREPARATIONS FOR DINNER ARE COMPLETE.
MASTER KATSURAGI, YOU ARE ALSO WELCOME TO JOIN.

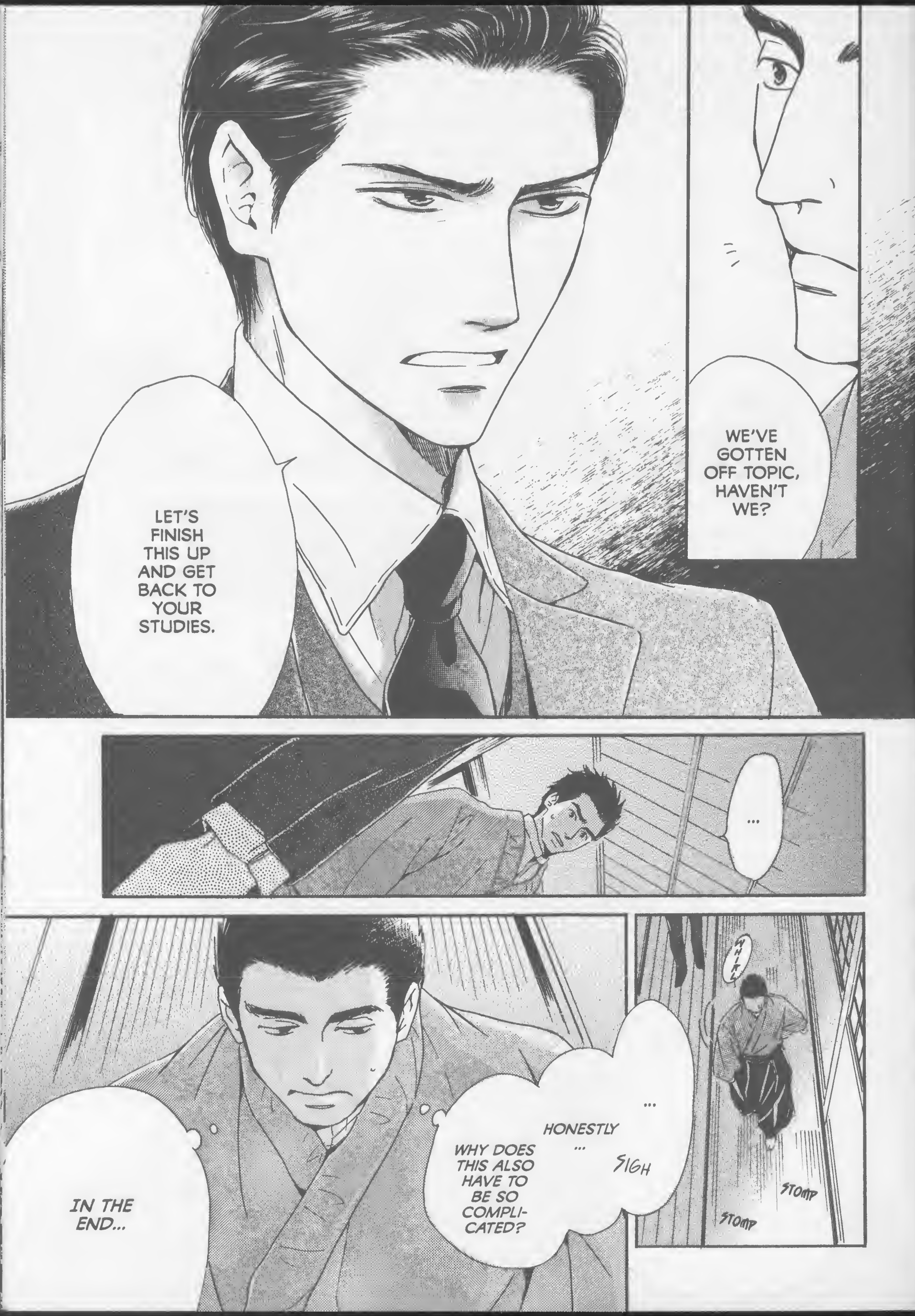

AND THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE?
MY MASTER HAS SAID THAT HE WILL NOT BE RETURNING TO THE HOUSE TODAY.
IF YOU ARE SO INCLINED, SIR, PLEASE DO ATTEND DINNER.
...?
STRANGE.
ISN'T THERE SOME MISTAKE? HE HAS AN APPOINTMENT WITH ME–
MUTTER
HE'S PROBABLY WITH ONE OF HIS MISTRESSES.
HE'S GOT SEVERAL OF THEM.
?
FLIP
FLIP
...
I'LL BE THERE SOON.
SET A PLACE FOR ME TOO.
UNDERSTOOD, SIR.

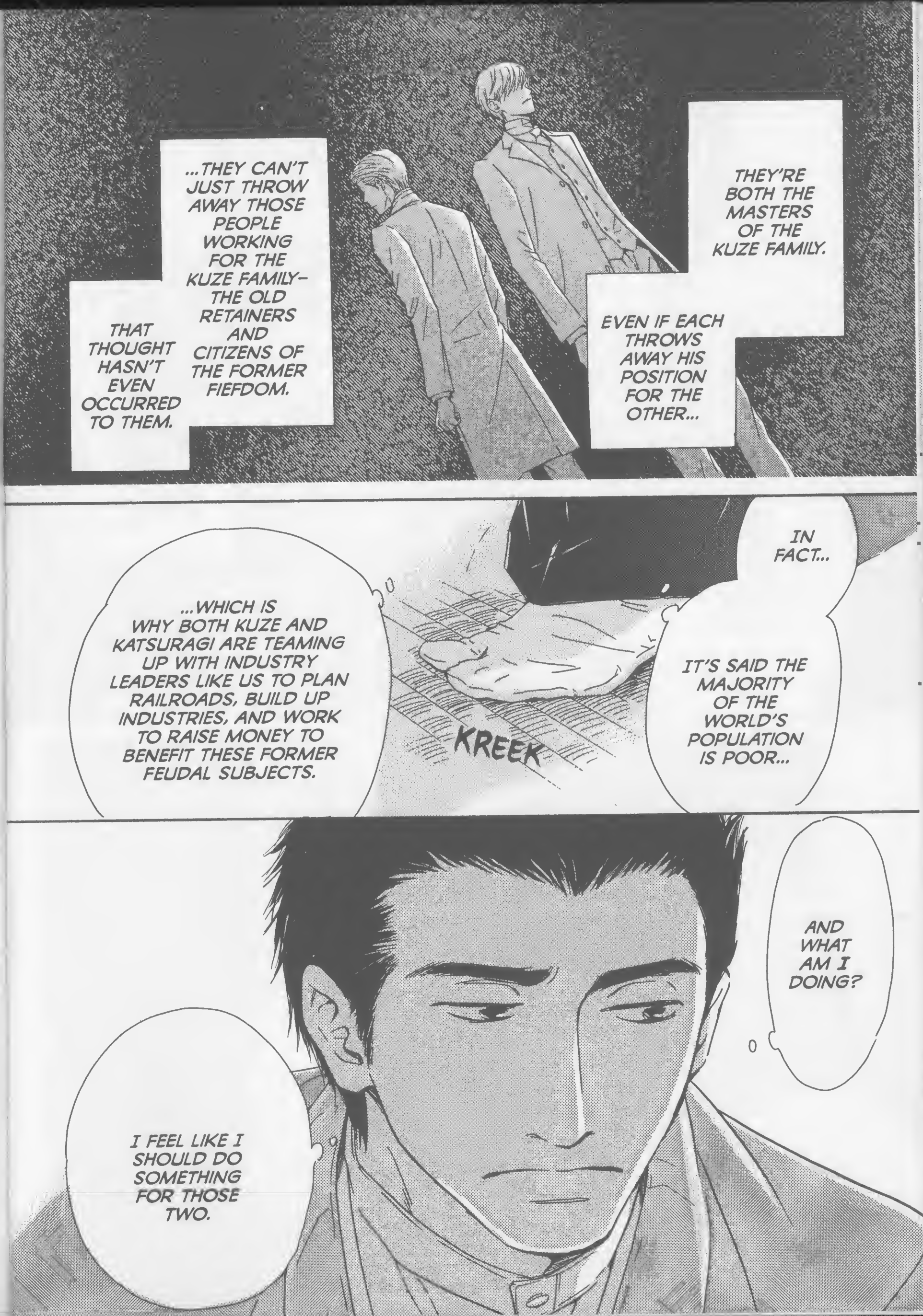

MASTER SOICHIRO.
YOUR FATHER SPOKE TO ME THE OTHER DAY ABOUT YOUR MARRIAGE.
...
I FIGURED.
EVER SINCE I HEARD YOU WERE COMING HERE, I'VE BEEN PREPARING MYSELF FOR THAT CONVERSATION.
I MEAN, IN THE END, MOVING UP TO A HIGHER POSITION...
WELL... IT'S THE FINAL PIECE OF THE PEDIGREE, ISN'T IT?
YOU HAVE TO CANCEL OUT THE SHAME OF YOUR ORIGIN WITH NOBLE BLOOD, OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

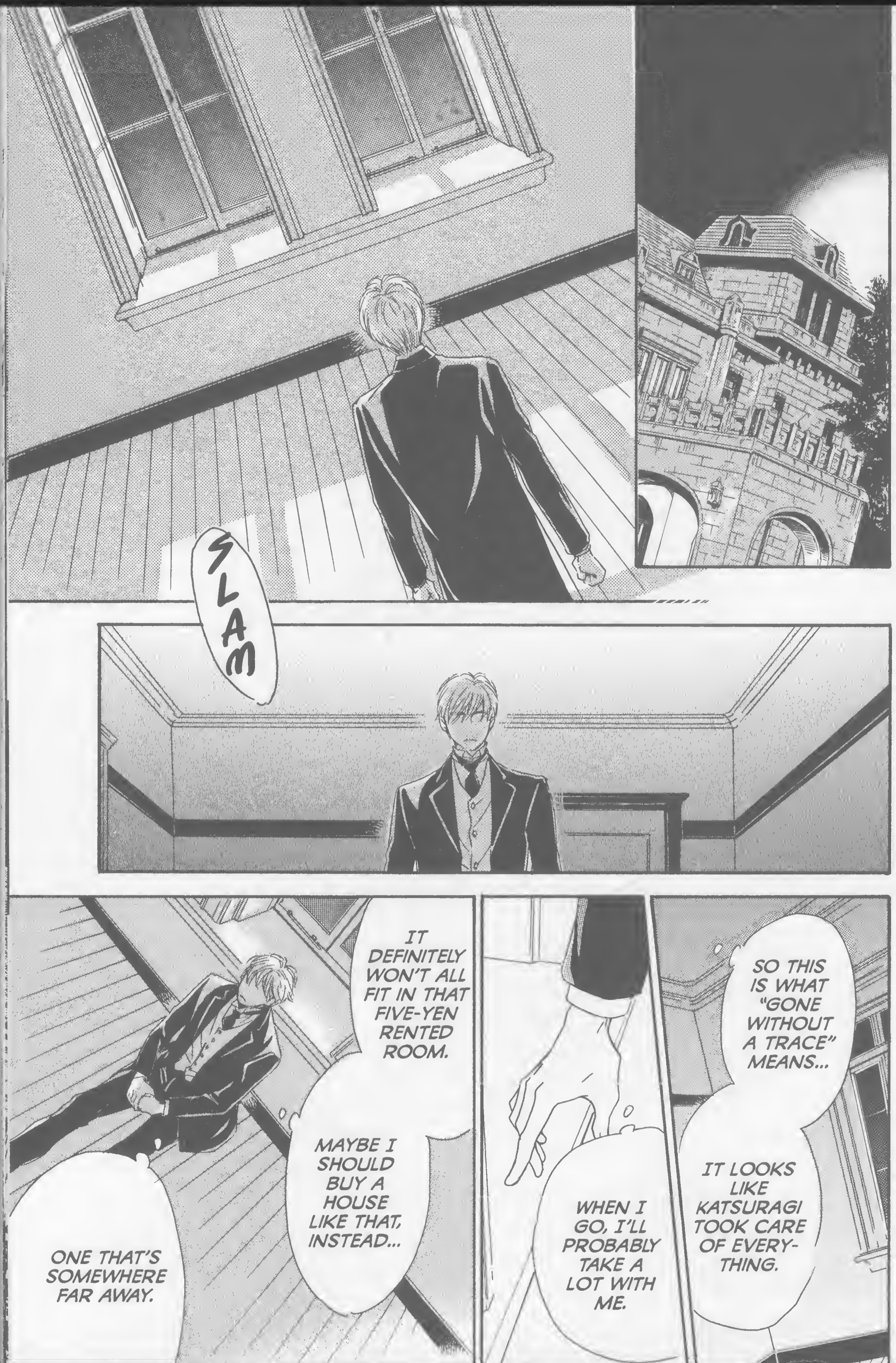

YOUR FATHER WISHES FOR A PRESTIGIOUS DAIMYO FAMILY OR AN IMPERIAL COURT PEDIGREE.
HA HA HA
I'M PRETTY SURE THE IMPERIAL COURT IS NOT GOING TO HAPPEN.
MAYBE IF SOME DAIMYO FAMILY IS DAZZLED BY OUR MONEY, THEY'LL OFFER UP ONE OF THEIR PRINCESSES.
GUESS THIS MEANS ...
...I CAN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT KUZE ANYMORE.
I'VE GOT NO CHOICE EITHER...
...
ARE YOU REALLY ALL RIGHT WITH THIS?
HUH?
...
SCARY.
IT WAS "KOFUSA" IN SHIMBASHI, WAS IT NOT?
THE GEISHA YOU'RE IN LOVE WITH?
YOU REALLY CHECK INTO EVERY-THING, HUH...
BEFORE SOMEONE FORCES YOUR HAND...

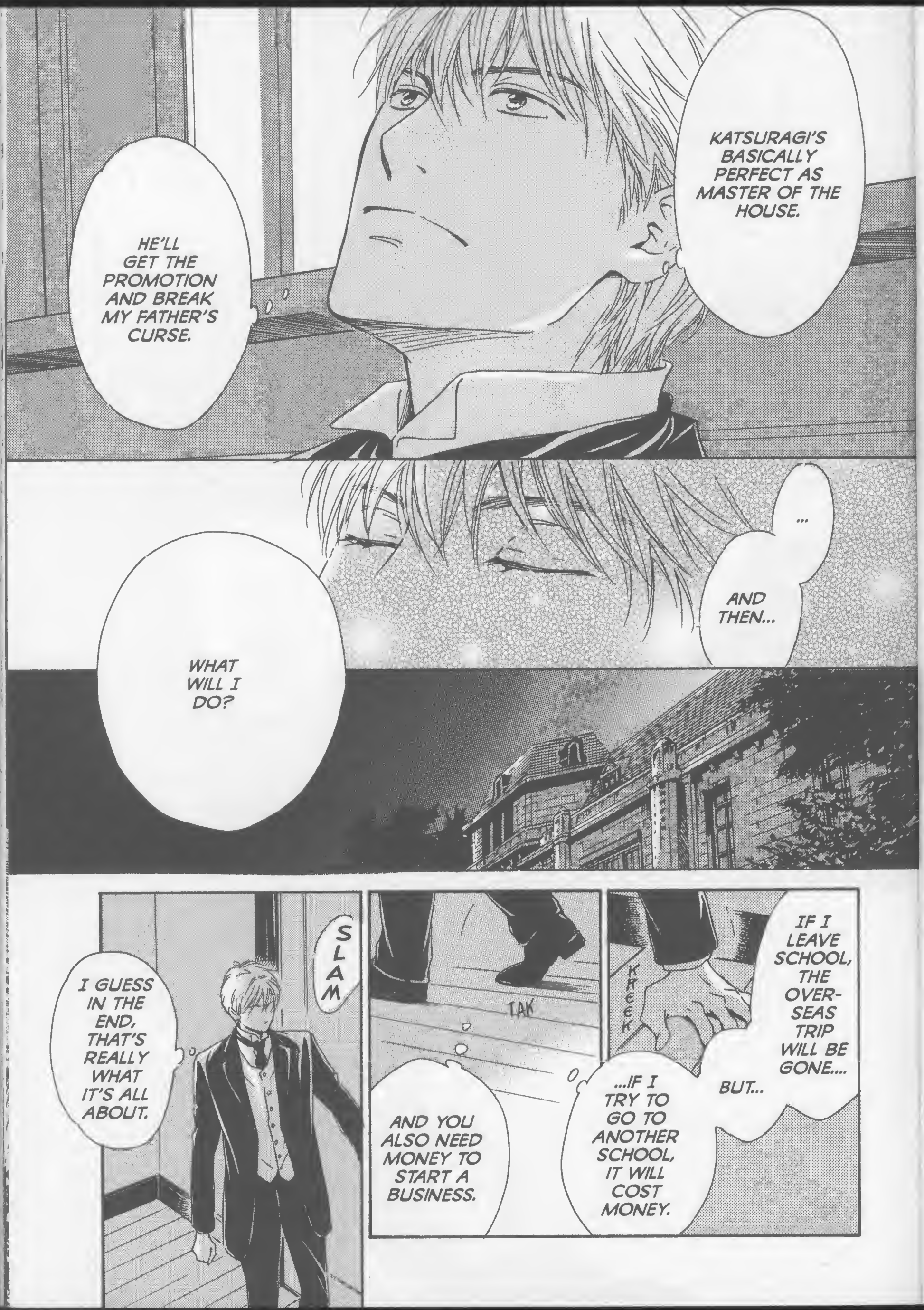

...PERHAPS YOU SHOULD TAKE ACTION.
IT WOULD BE BEST TO REFRAIN FROM HAVING YOUR NAME INVOLVED.
I HAVE NO ISSUE WITH MAKING IT LOOK LIKE I'M THE ONE BUYING HER OUT OF BONDAGE.
IT'D ALSO BE BEST IF YOU GAVE HER A SHOP.
IF YOU REALLY ARE SERIOUS ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS FOR HER...
...HAVING HER BY YOUR SIDE WOULD BE GOOD ENCOURAGEMENT FOR YOU GOING FORWARD. I DO THINK THIS WOULD PERHAPS BE BEST-
PFF
HA HA HA!
MASTER SOICHI-RO?
OH...
YOU...
YOU'RE SAYING THE SAME THING KUZE DID.

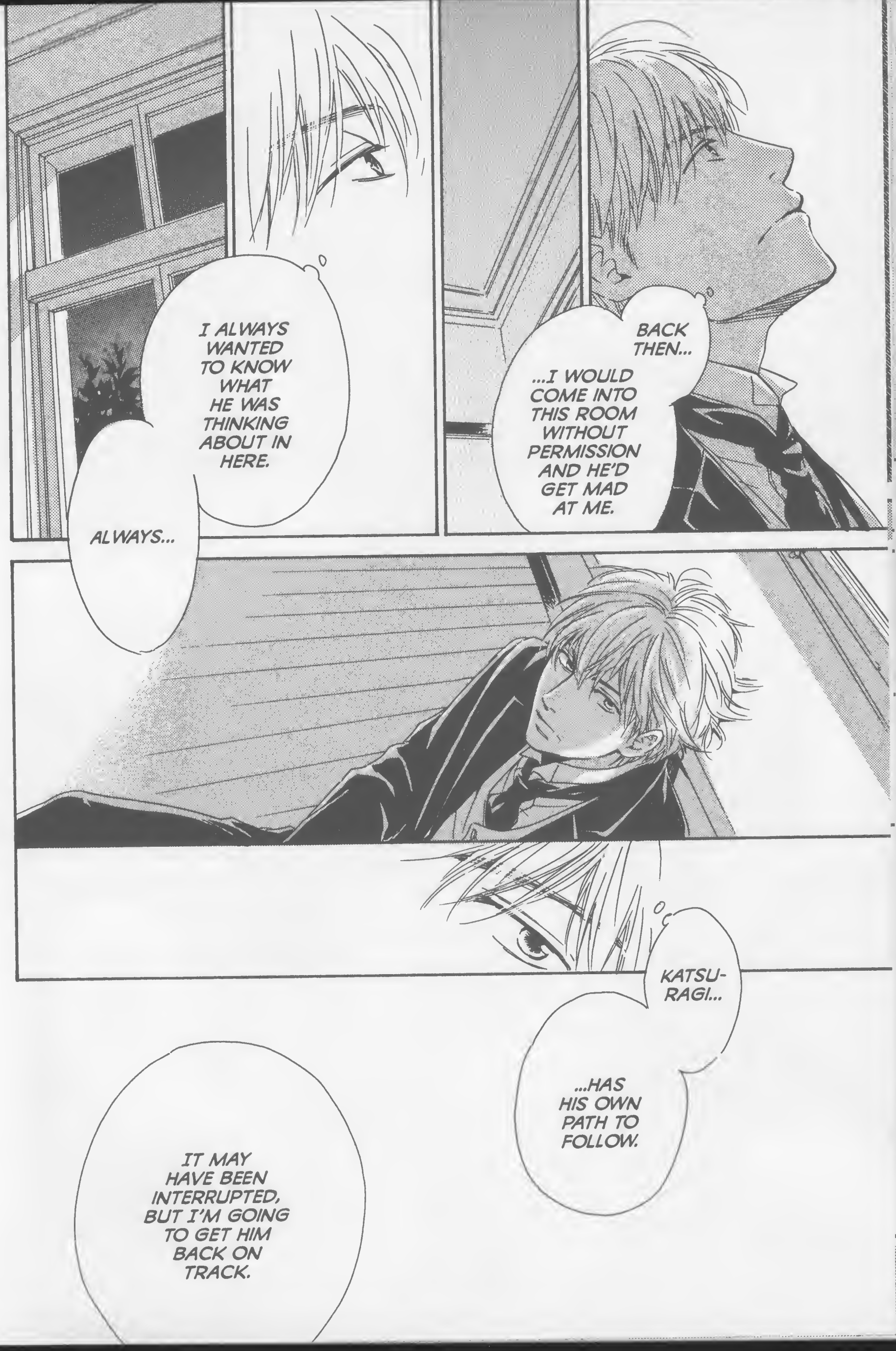

A WHILE AGO, KUZE SAID THE EXACT SAME THING TO ME.
THAT IF I WAS SERIOUS ABOUT HER, I SHOULD HAVE HER WITH ME.
SO WHY EXACTLY...
...CAN'T THE TWO OF YOU MANAGE THAT?
CLENCH

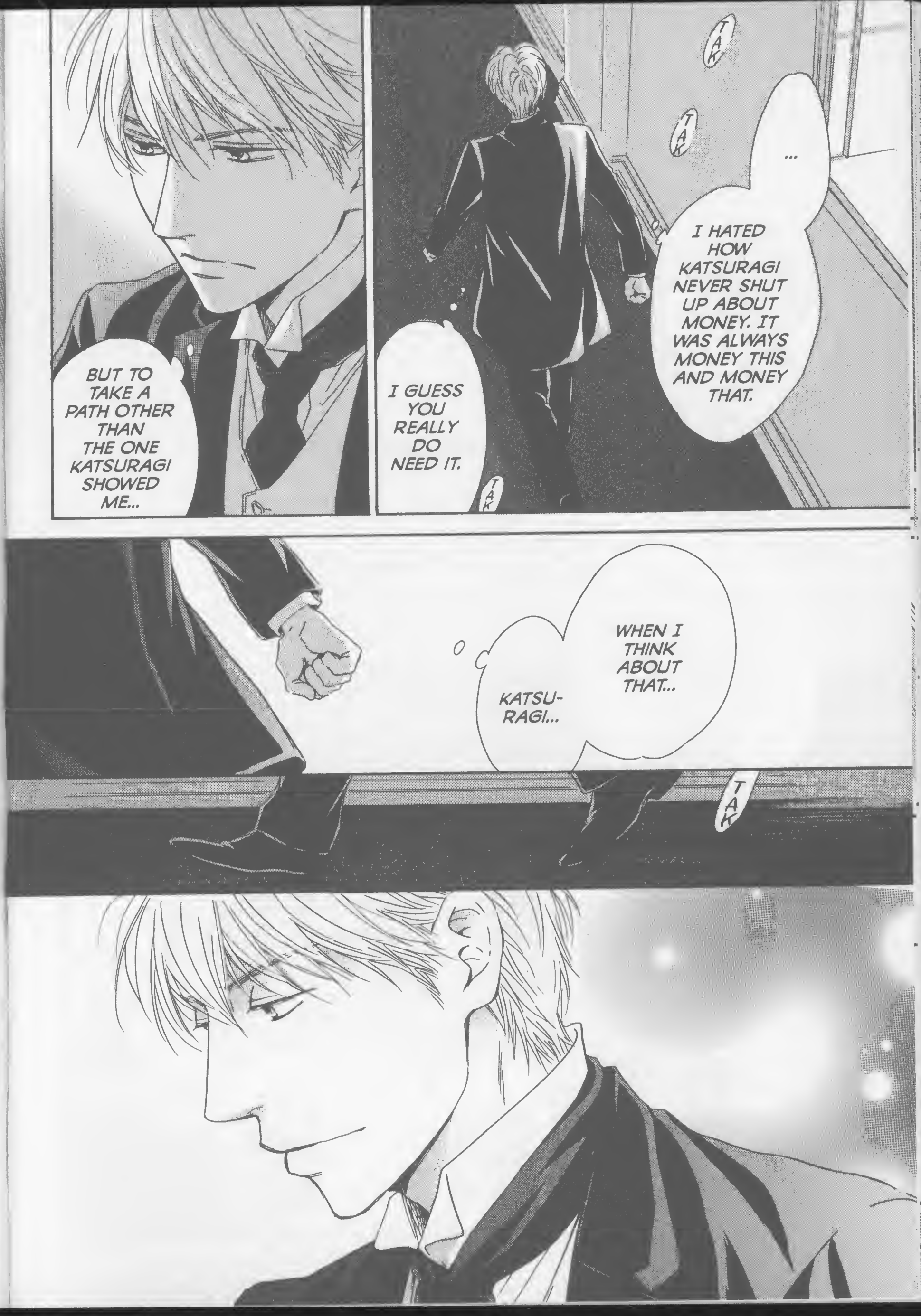

WE'VE GOTTEN OFF TOPIC, HAVEN'T WE?
LET'S FINISH THIS UP AND GET BACK TO YOUR STUDIES.
...
WHIRL
STOMP
STOMP
...
HONESTLY ...
SIGH
WHY DOES THIS ALSO HAVE TO BE SO COMPLICATED?
IN THE END...

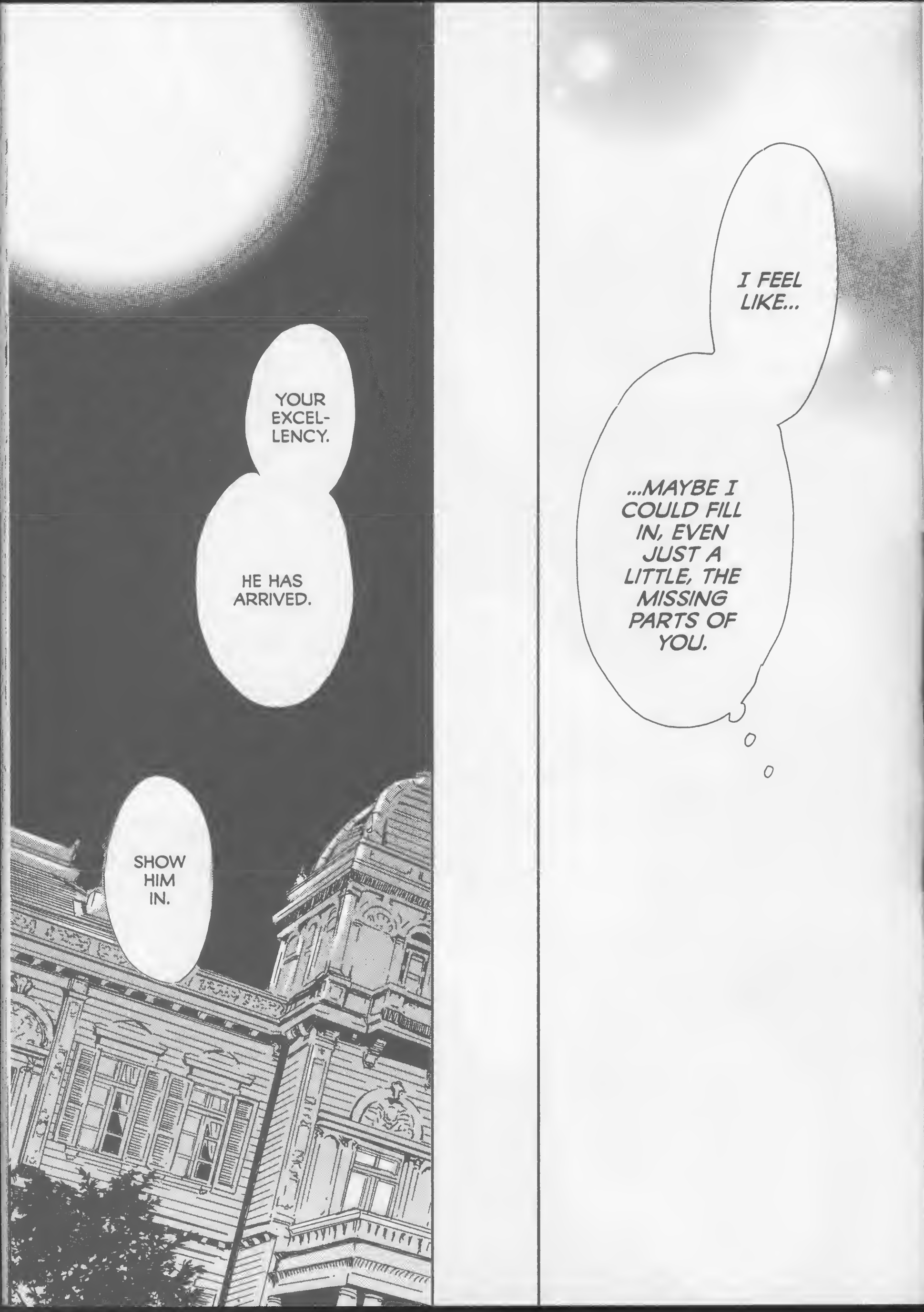

THEY'RE BOTH THE MASTERS OF THE KUZE FAMILY.
EVEN IF EACH THROWS AWAY HIS POSITION FOR THE OTHER...
...THEY CAN'T JUST THROW AWAY THOSE PEOPLE WORKING FOR THE KUZE FAMILY–THE OLD RETAINERS AND CITIZENS OF THE FORMER FIEFDOM.
THAT THOUGHT HASN'T EVEN OCCURRED TO THEM.
IN FACT...
IT'S SAID THE MAJORITY OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION IS POOR...
KREEK
...WHICH IS WHY BOTH KUZE AND KATSURAGI ARE TEAMING UP WITH INDUSTRY LEADERS LIKE US TO PLAN RAILROADS, BUILD UP INDUSTRIES, AND WORK TO RAISE MONEY TO BENEFIT THESE FORMER FEUDAL SUBJECTS.
AND WHAT AM I DOING?
I FEEL LIKE I SHOULD DO SOMETHING FOR THOSE TWO.

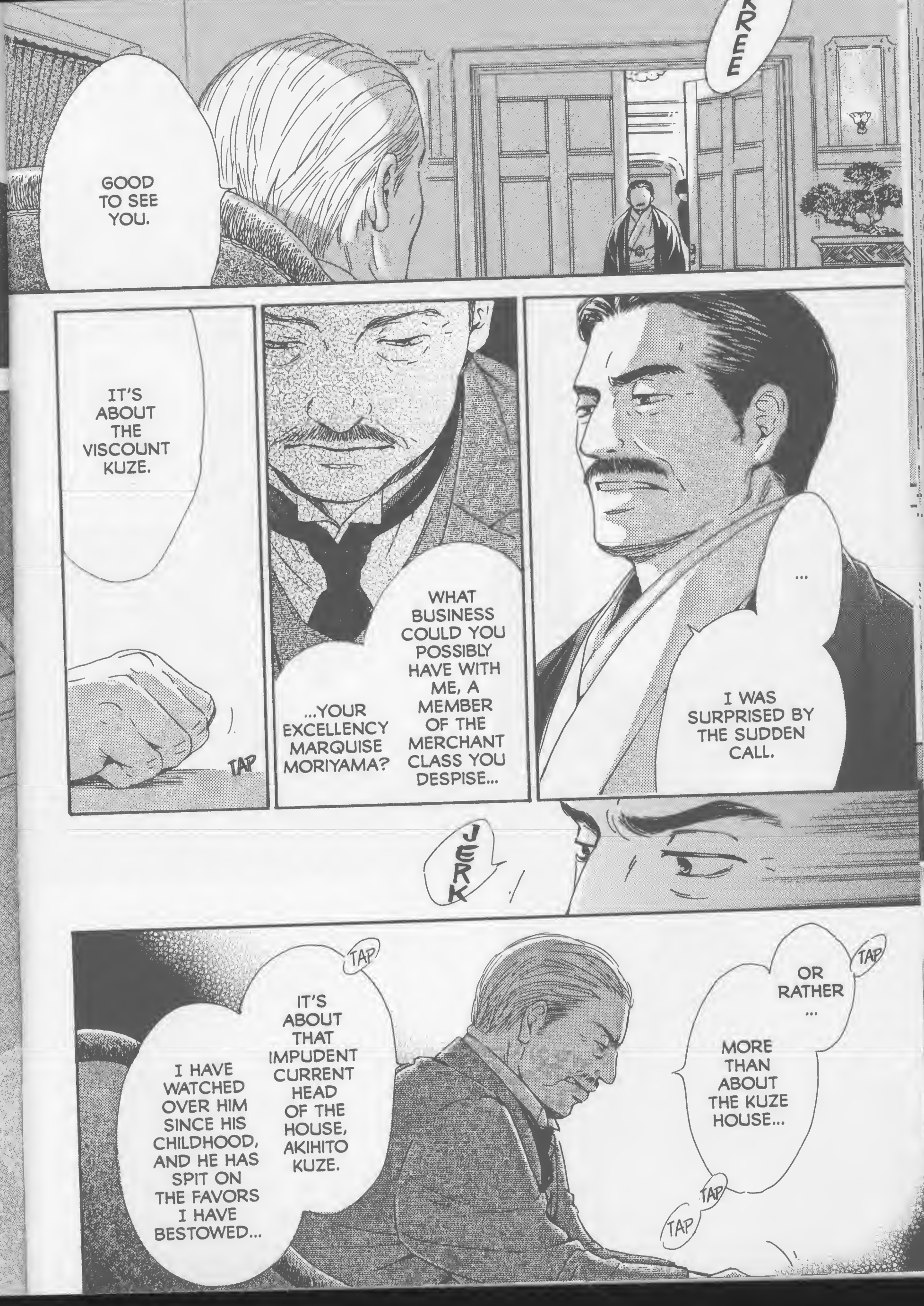

SLAM
SO THIS IS WHAT "GONE WITHOUT A TRACE" MEANS...
IT LOOKS LIKE KATSURAGI TOOK CARE OF EVERY-THING.
WHEN I GO, I'LL PROBABLY TAKE A LOT WITH ME.
IT DEFINITELY WON'T ALL FIT IN THAT FIVE-YEN RENTED ROOM.
MAYBE I SHOULD BUY A HOUSE LIKE THAT, INSTEAD...
ONE THAT'S SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY.

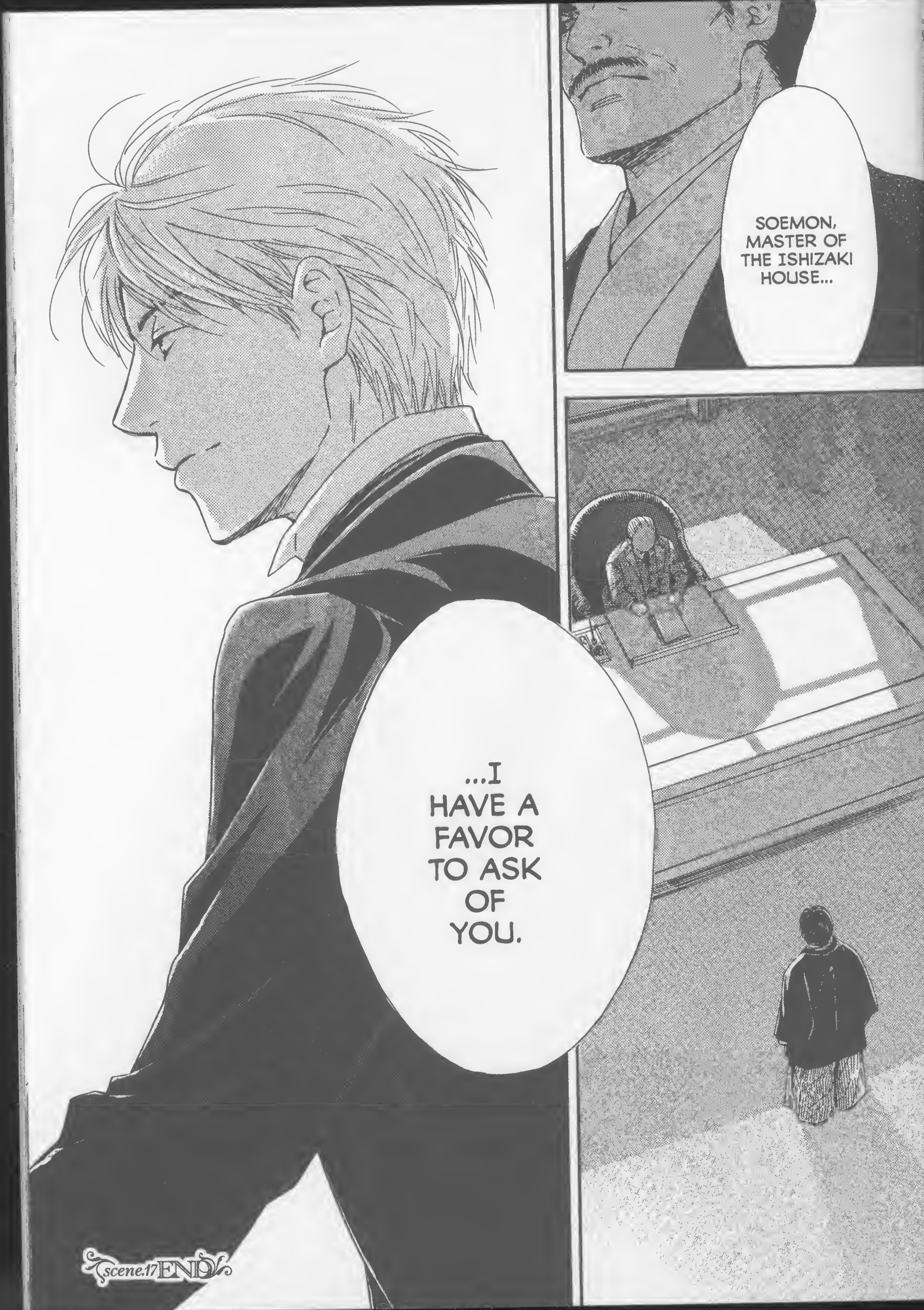

KATSURAGI'S BASICALLY PERFECT AS MASTER OF THE HOUSE.
HE'LL GET THE PROMOTION AND BREAK MY FATHER'S CURSE.
...
AND THEN...
WHAT WILL I DO?
IF I LEAVE SCHOOL, THE OVERSEAS TRIP WILL BE GONE....
BUT...
KREEK
...IF I TRY TO GO TO ANOTHER SCHOOL, IT WILL COST MONEY.
TAK
AND YOU ALSO NEED MONEY TO START A BUSINESS.
SLAM
I GUESS IN THE END, THAT'S REALLY WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT.


BACK THEN...
...I WOULD COME INTO THIS ROOM WITHOUT PERMISSION AND HE'D GET MAD AT ME.
I ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW WHAT HE WAS THINKING ABOUT IN HERE.
ALWAYS...
KATSURAGI...
...HAS HIS OWN PATH TO FOLLOW.
IT MAY HAVE BEEN INTERRUPTED, BUT I'M GOING TO GET HIM BACK ON TRACK.


TAK
TAK
...
I HATED HOW KATSURAGI NEVER SHUT UP ABOUT MONEY. IT WAS ALWAYS MONEY THIS AND MONEY THAT.
I GUESS YOU REALLY DO NEED IT.
TAK
BUT TO TAKE A PATH OTHER THAN THE ONE KATSURAGI SHOWED ME...
WHEN I THINK ABOUT THAT...
KATSURAGI...
TAK


I FEEL LIKE...
...MAYBE I COULD FILL IN, EVEN JUST A LITTLE, THE MISSING PARTS OF YOU.
YOUR EXCELLENCY.
HE HAS ARRIVED.
SHOW HIM IN.


KREE
GOOD TO SEE YOU.
...
I WAS SURPRISED BY THE SUDDEN CALL.
WHAT BUSINESS COULD YOU POSSIBLY HAVE WITH ME, A MEMBER OF THE MERCHANT CLASS YOU DESPISE...
...YOUR EXCELLENCY MARQUISE MORIYAMA?
IT'S ABOUT THE VISCOUNT KUZE.
TAP
JERK
TAP
OR RATHER...
MORE THAN ABOUT THE KUZE HOUSE...
TAP
TAP
TAP
IT'S ABOUT THAT IMPUDENT CURRENT HEAD OF THE HOUSE, AKIHITO KUZE.
I HAVE WATCHED OVER HIM SINCE HIS CHILDHOOD, AND HE HAS SPIT ON THE FAVORS I HAVE BESTOWED...


SOEMON, MASTER OF THE ISHIZAKI HOUSE...
...I HAVE A FAVOR TO ASK OF YOU.

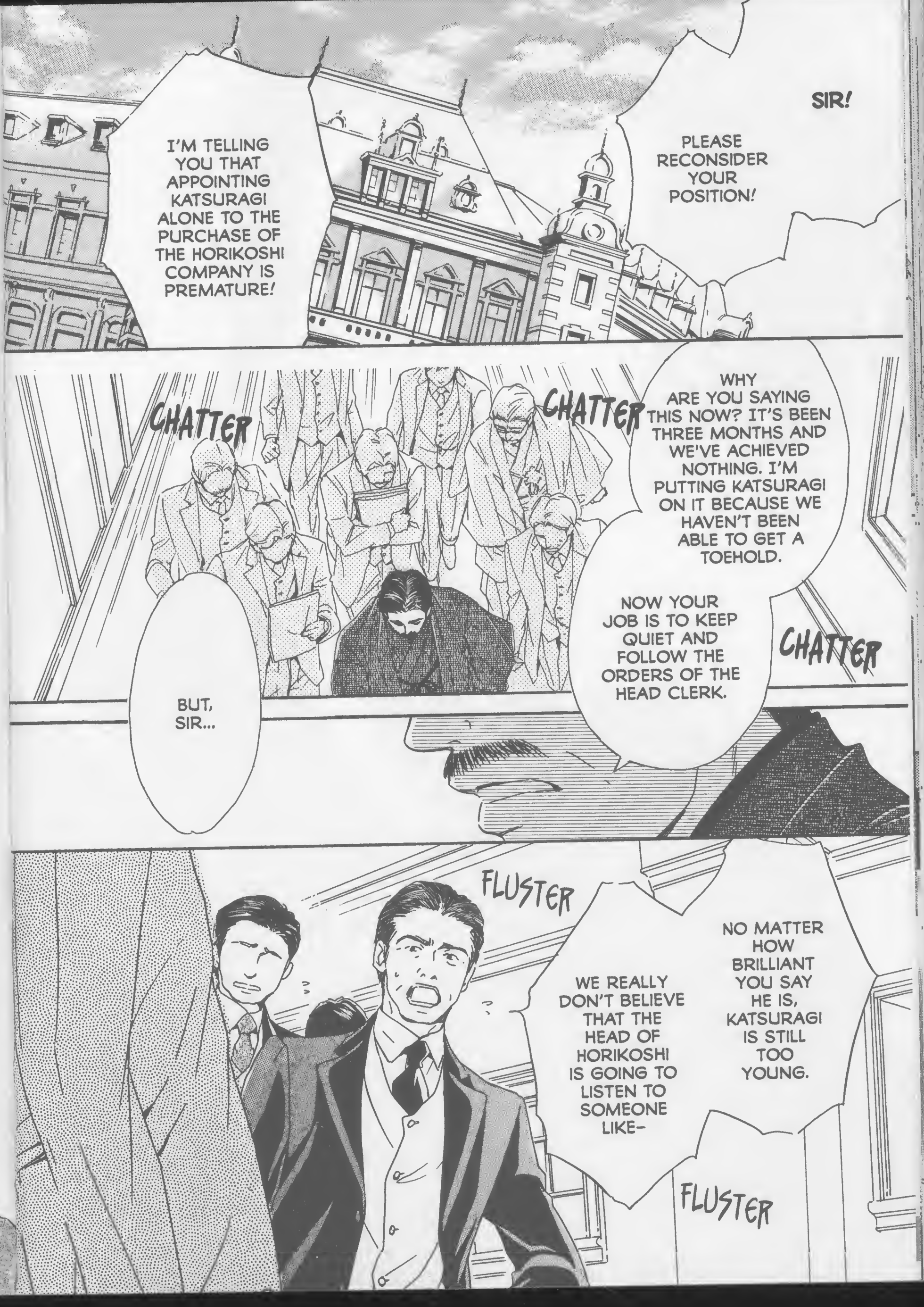
scene.17 END

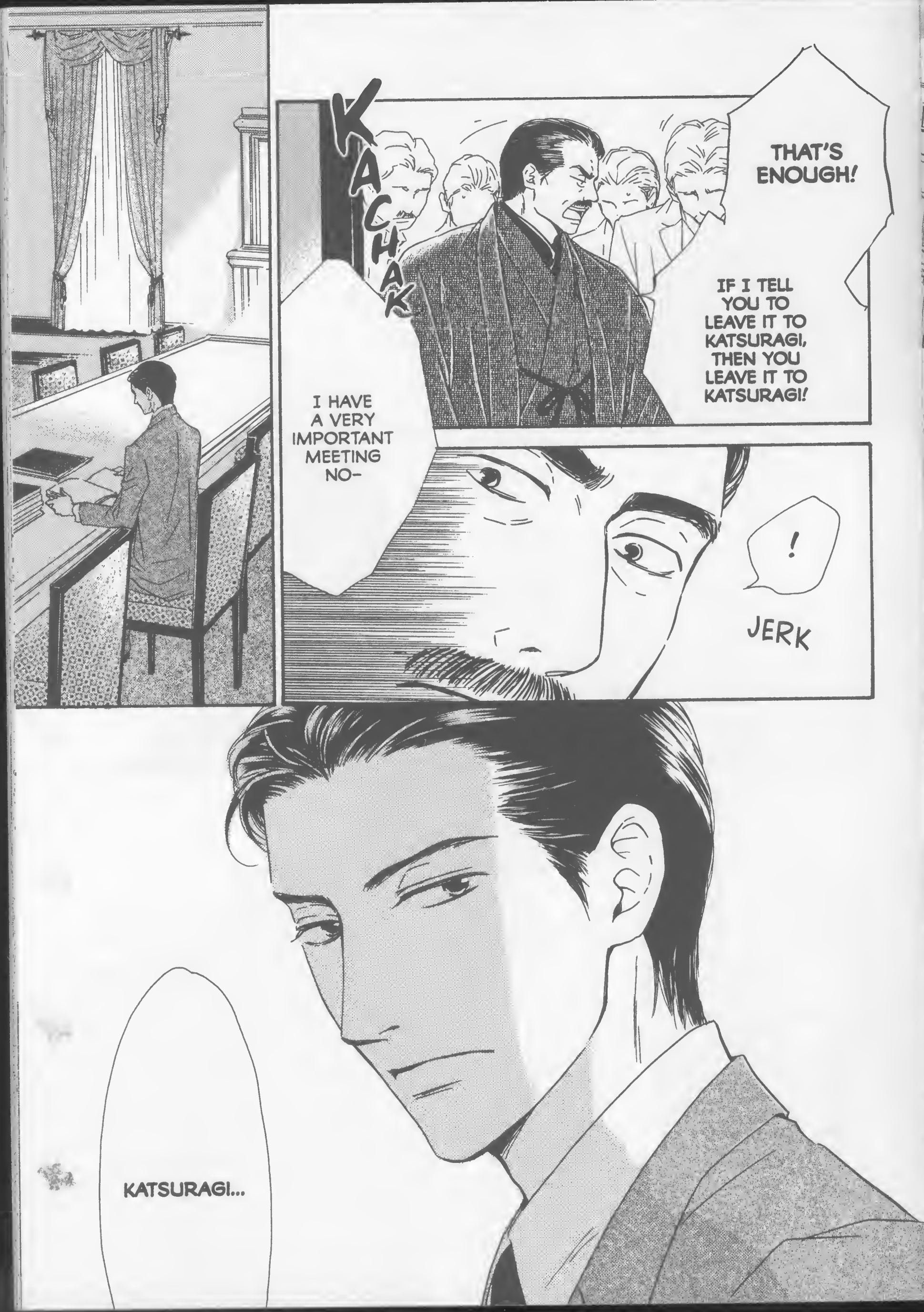
憂鬱な朝

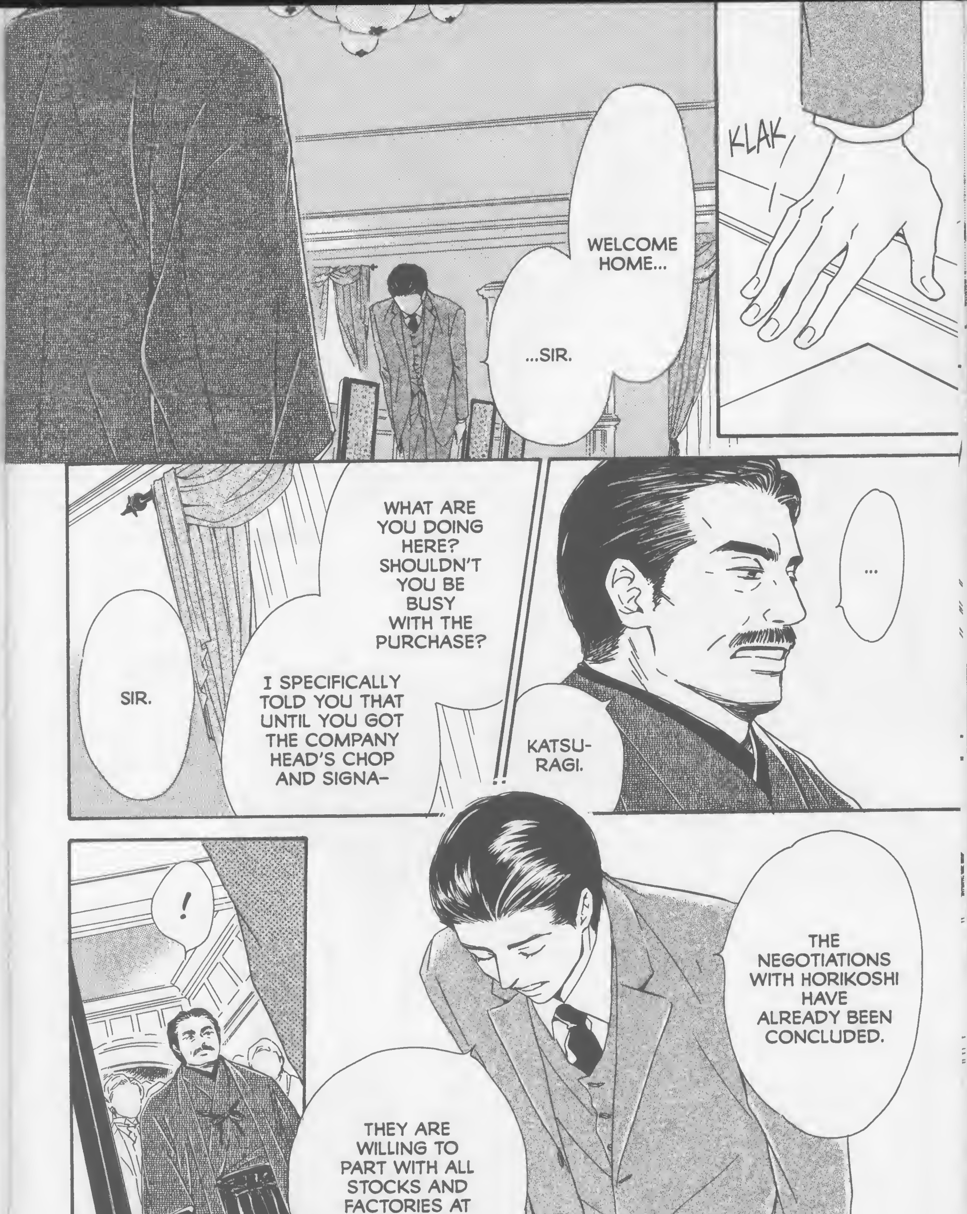
scene.18

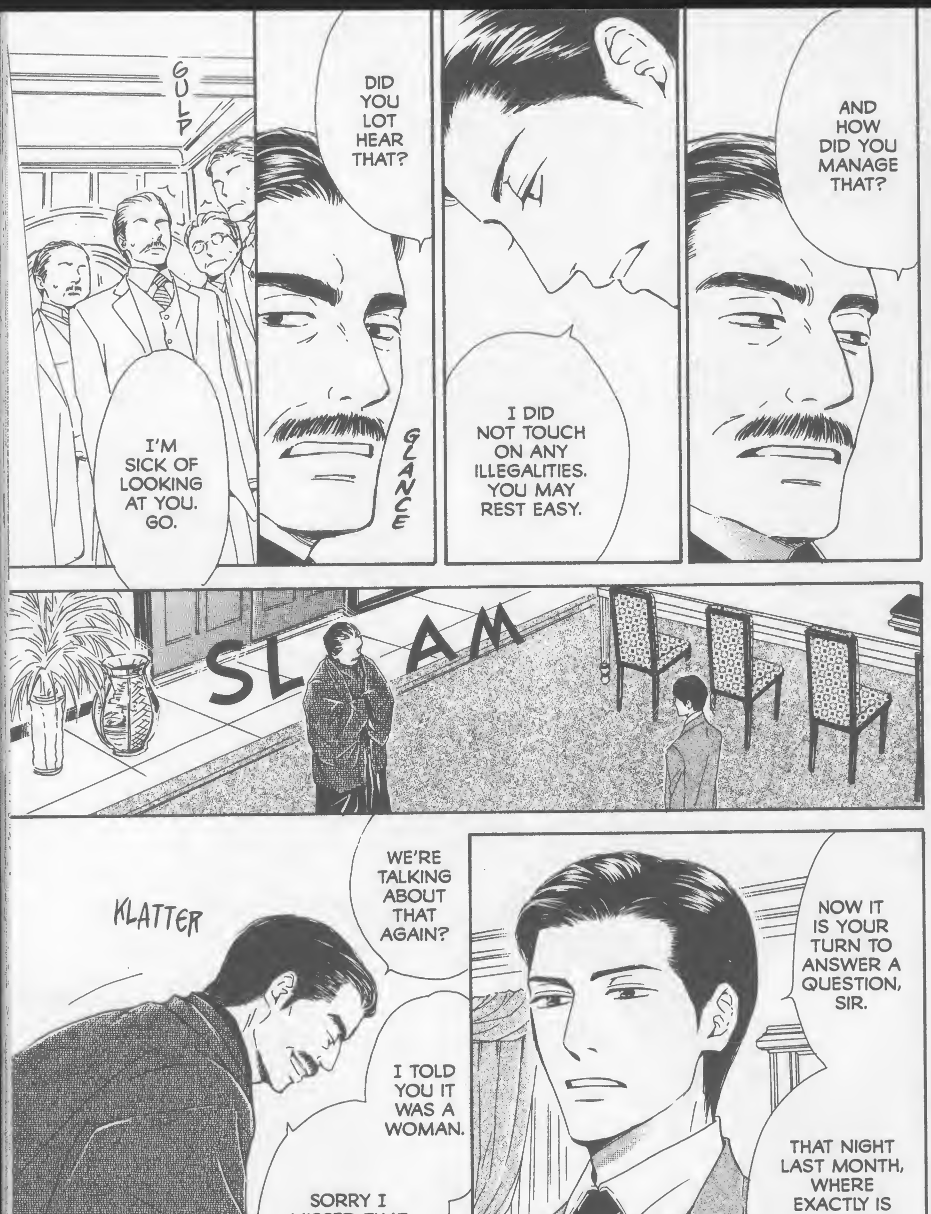
Blue Morning: Scene 18

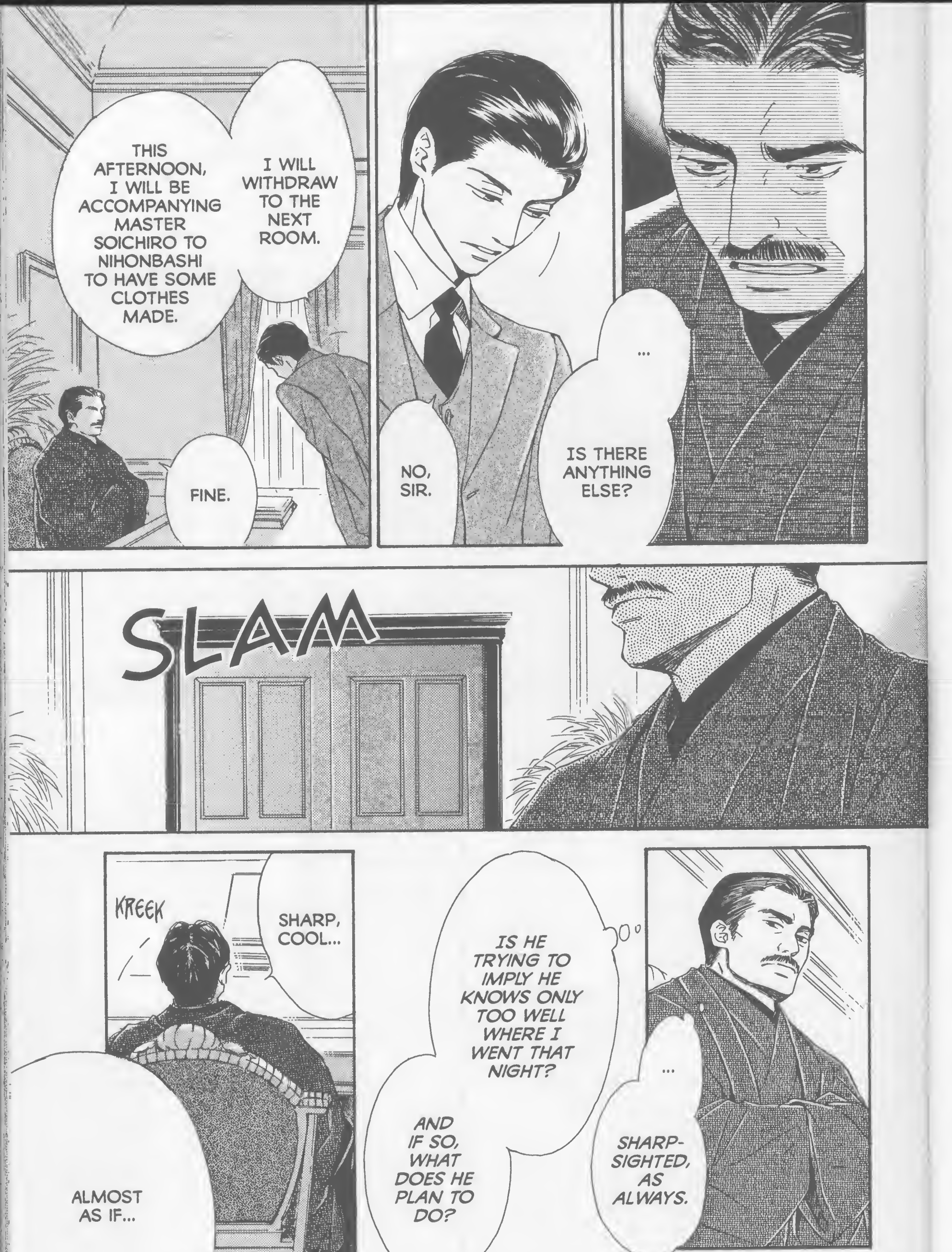
憂鬱な朝

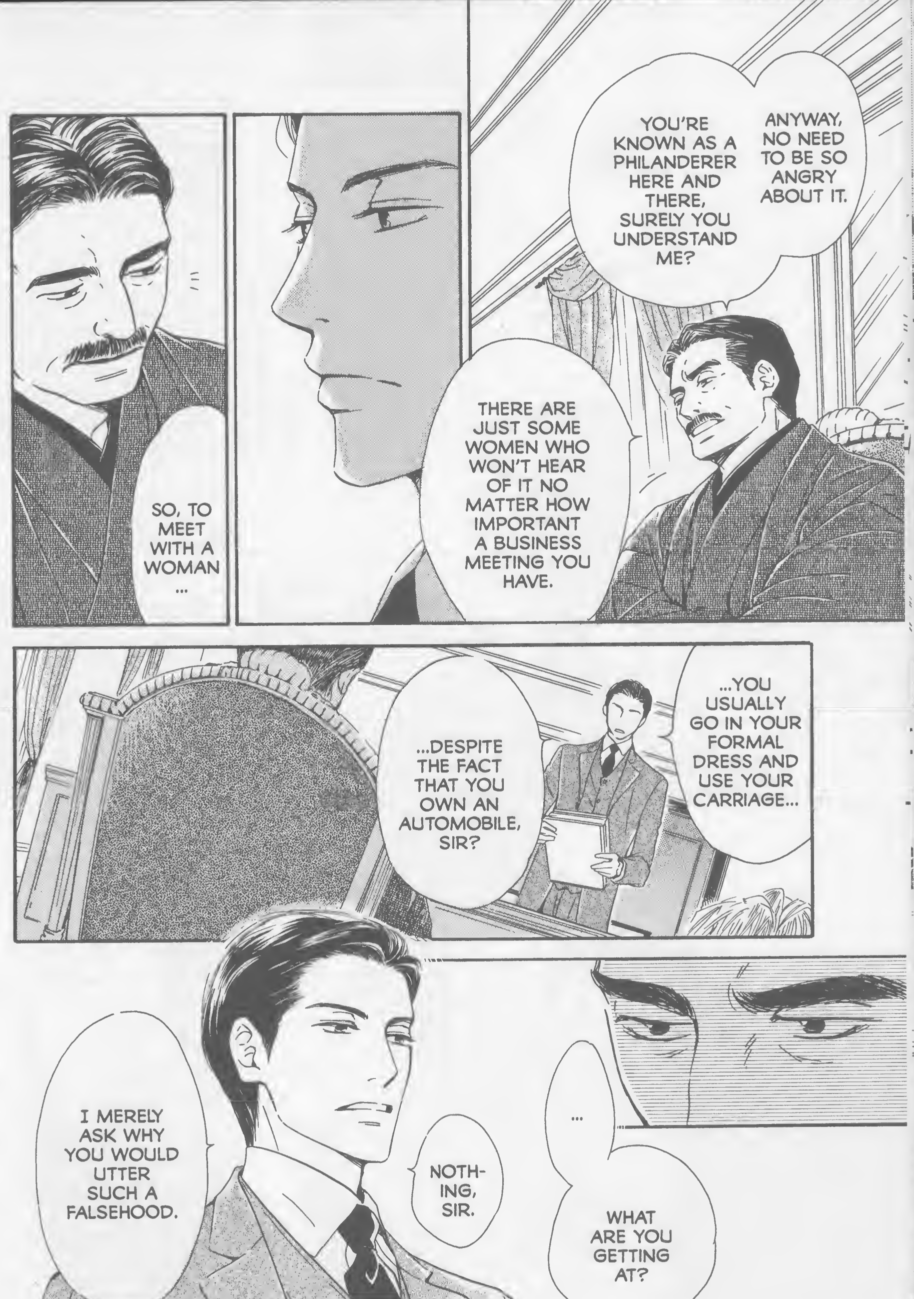

SIR!
PLEASE RECONSIDER YOUR POSITION!
I'M TELLING YOU THAT APPOINTING KATSURAGI ALONE TO THE PURCHASE OF THE HORIKOSHI COMPANY IS PREMATURE!
WHY ARE YOU SAYING THIS NOW? IT'S BEEN THREE MONTHS AND WE'VE ACHIEVED NOTHING. I'M PUTTING KATSURAGI ON IT BECAUSE WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET A TOEHOLD.
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER
NOW YOUR JOB IS TO KEEP QUIET AND FOLLOW THE ORDERS OF THE HEAD CLERK.
BUT, SIR...
NO MATTER HOW BRILLIANT YOU SAY HE IS, KATSURAGI IS STILL TOO YOUNG.
WE REALLY DON'T BELIEVE THAT THE HEAD OF HORIKOSHI IS GOING TO LISTEN TO SOMEONE LIKE-
FLUSTER
FLUSTER

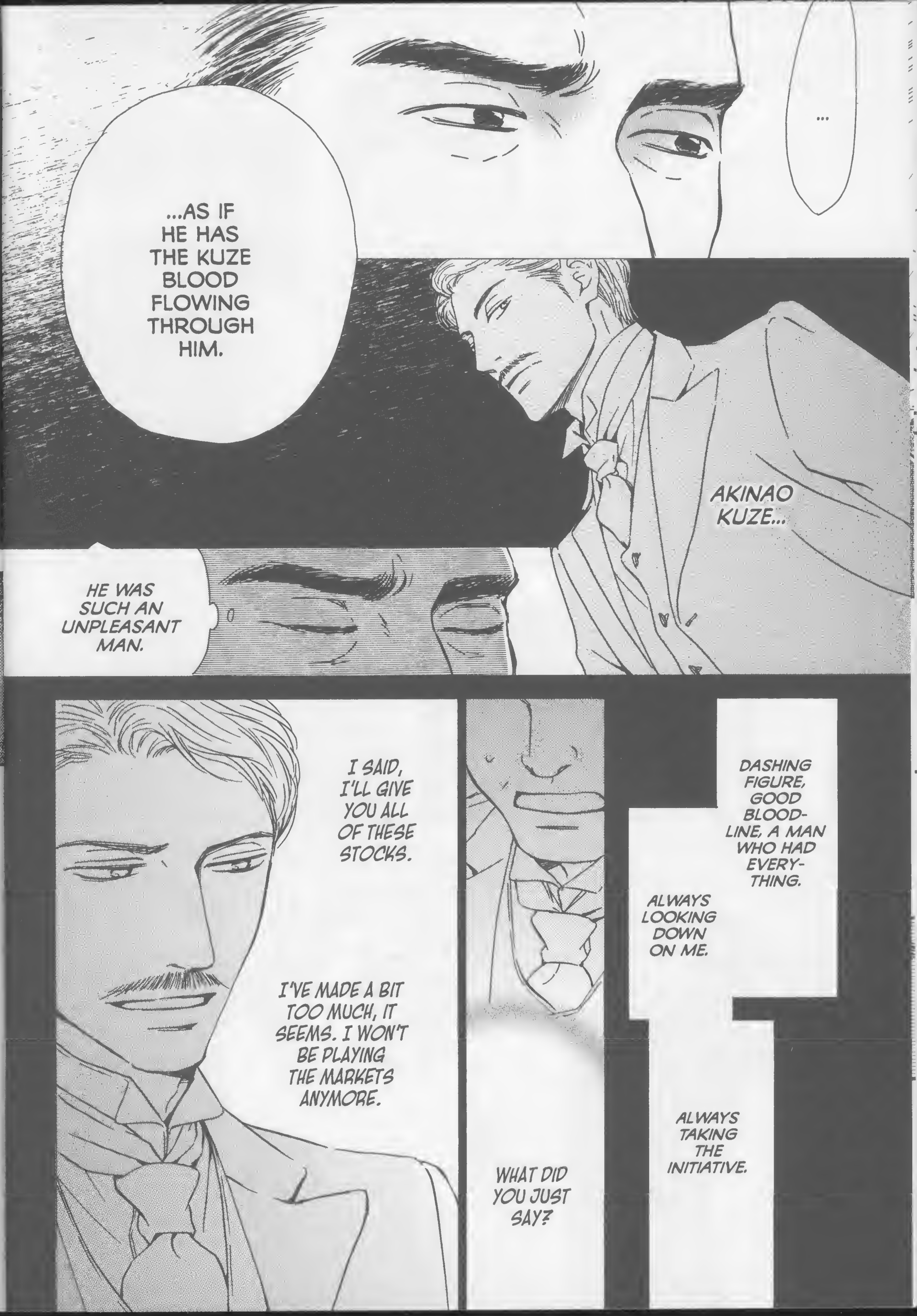

THAT'S ENOUGH!
IF I TELL YOU TO LEAVE IT TO KATSURAGI, THEN YOU LEAVE IT TO KATSURAGI!
KACHAK
I HAVE A VERY IMPORTANT MEETING NO-
!
JERK
KATSURAGI...

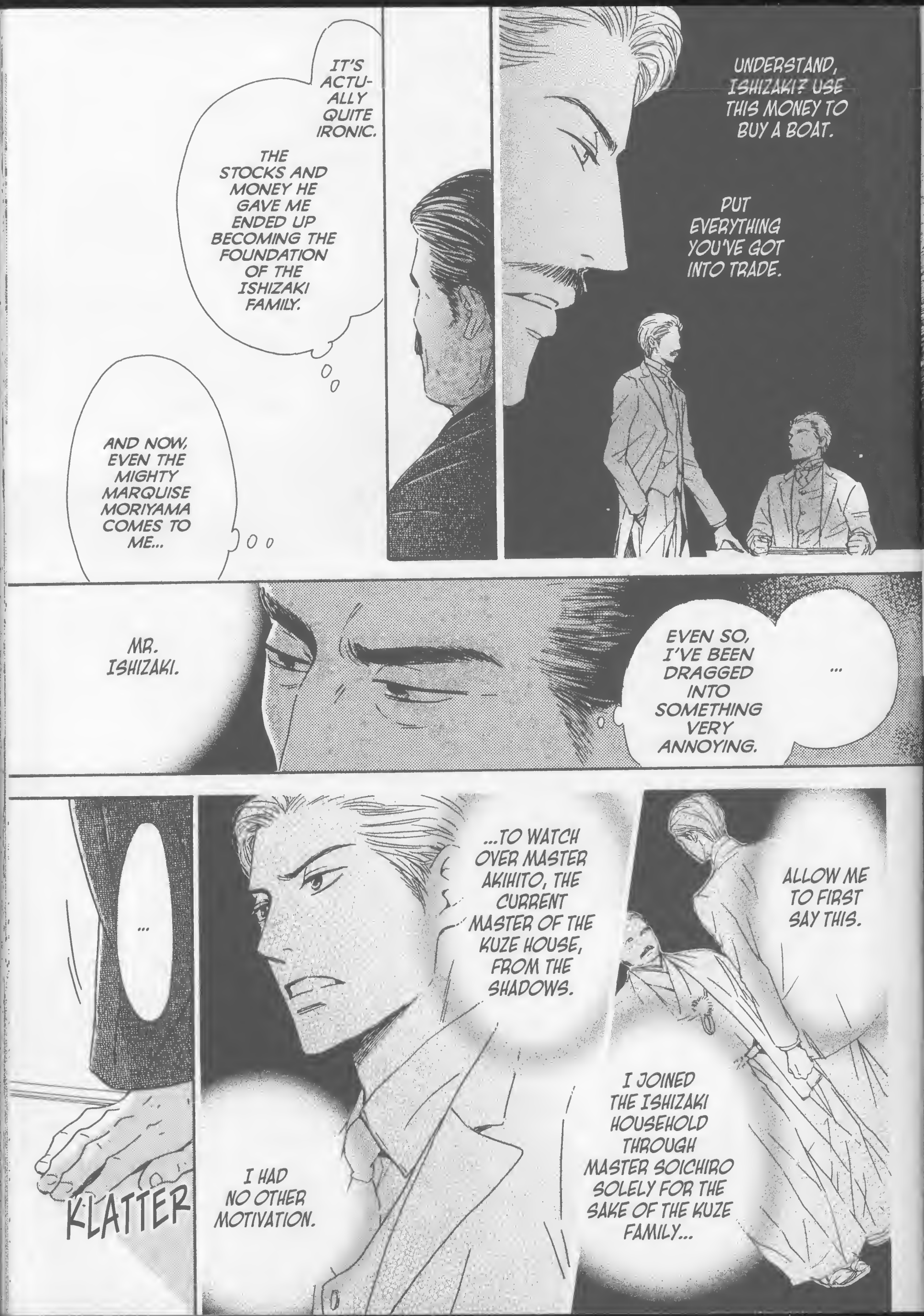

KLAK
WELCOME HOME...
...SIR.
...
KATSURAGI.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? SHOULDN'T YOU BE BUSY WITH THE PURCHASE?
I SPECIFICALLY TOLD YOU THAT UNTIL YOU GOT THE COMPANY HEAD'S CHOP AND SIGNA–
SIR.
!
THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH HORIKOSHI HAVE ALREADY BEEN CONCLUDED.
THEY ARE WILLING TO PART WITH ALL STOCKS AND FACTORIES AT YOUR ASKING PRICE.

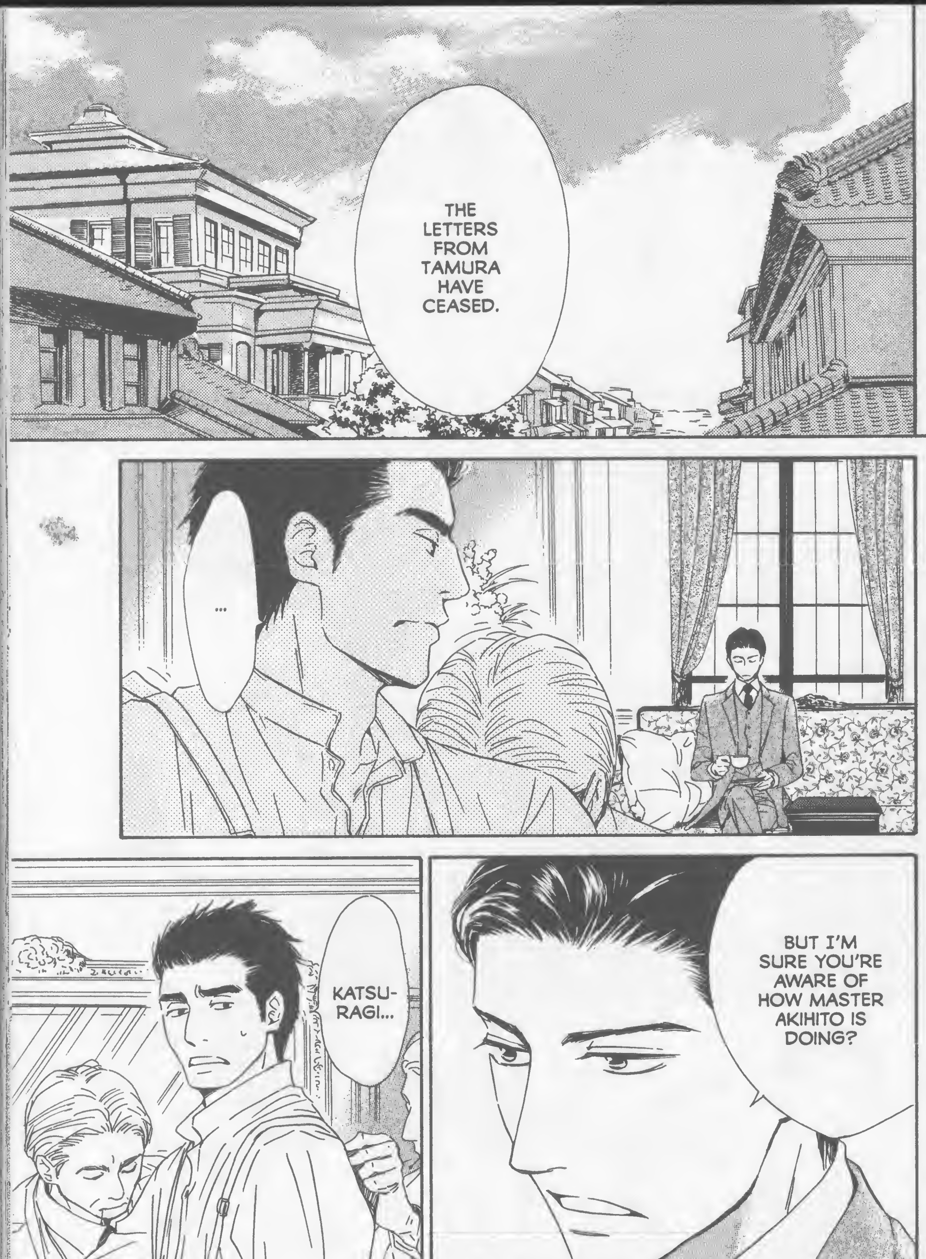

AND HOW DID YOU MANAGE THAT?
I DID NOT TOUCH ON ANY ILLEGALITIES. YOU MAY REST EASY.
DID YOU LOT HEAR THAT?
GLANCE
GULP
I'M SICK OF LOOKING AT YOU. GO.
SLAM
NOW IT IS YOUR TURN TO ANSWER A QUESTION, SIR.
THAT NIGHT LAST MONTH, WHERE EXACTLY IS IT THAT YOU WENT, IF I MAY ASK?
KLATTER
WE'RE TALKING ABOUT THAT AGAIN?
I TOLD YOU IT WAS A WOMAN.
SORRY I MISSED THAT APPOINTMENT WITH YOU.

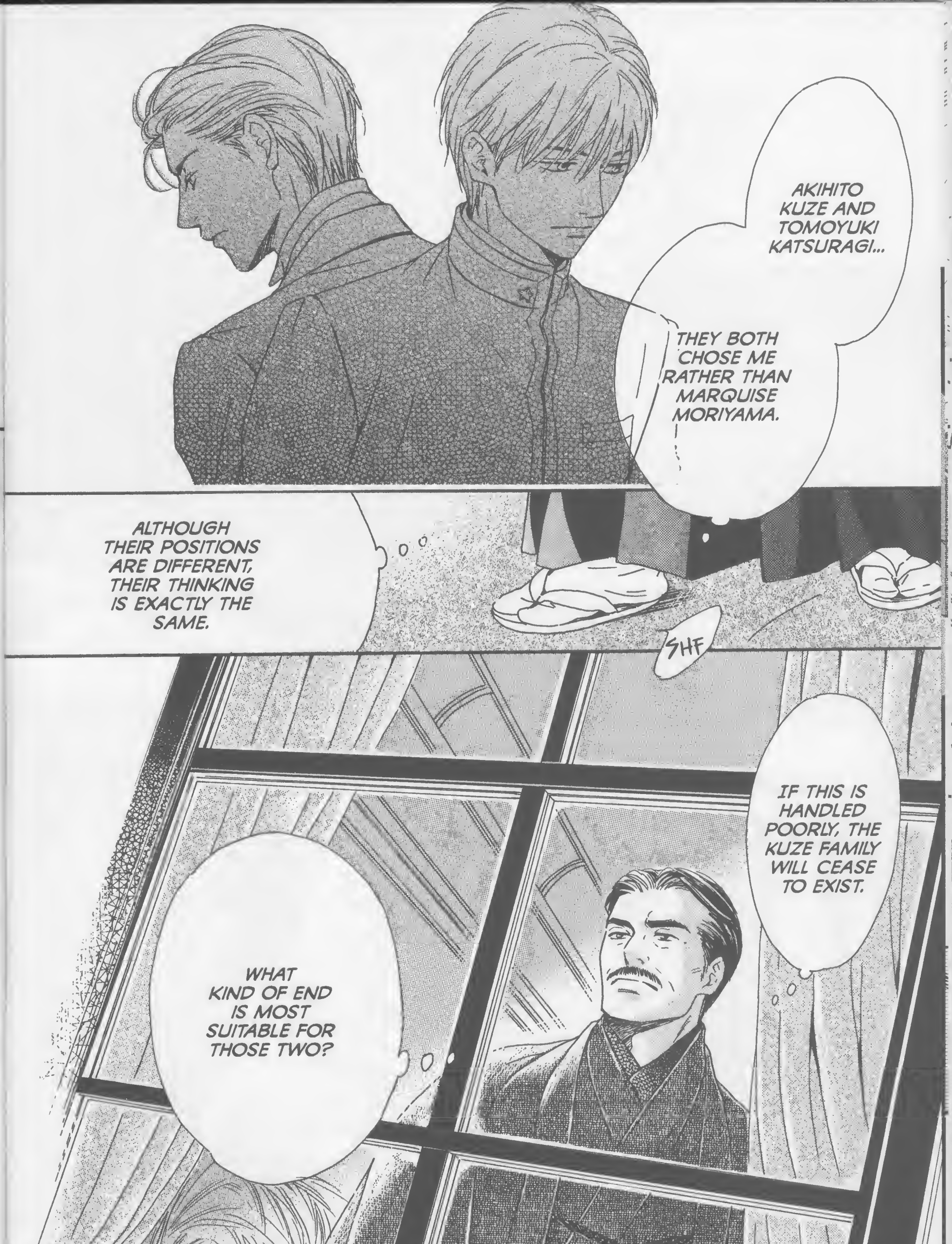

THIS AFTERNOON, I WILL BE ACCOMPANYING MASTER SOICHIRO TO NIHONBASHI TO HAVE SOME CLOTHES MADE.
I WILL WITHDRAW TO THE NEXT ROOM.
FINE.
...
IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE?
NO, SIR.
SLAM
KREEK
SHARP, COOL...
ALMOST AS IF...
IS HE TRYING TO IMPLY HE KNOWS ONLY TOO WELL WHERE I WENT THAT NIGHT?
AND IF SO, WHAT DOES HE PLAN TO DO?
...
SHARP-SIGHTED, AS ALWAYS.

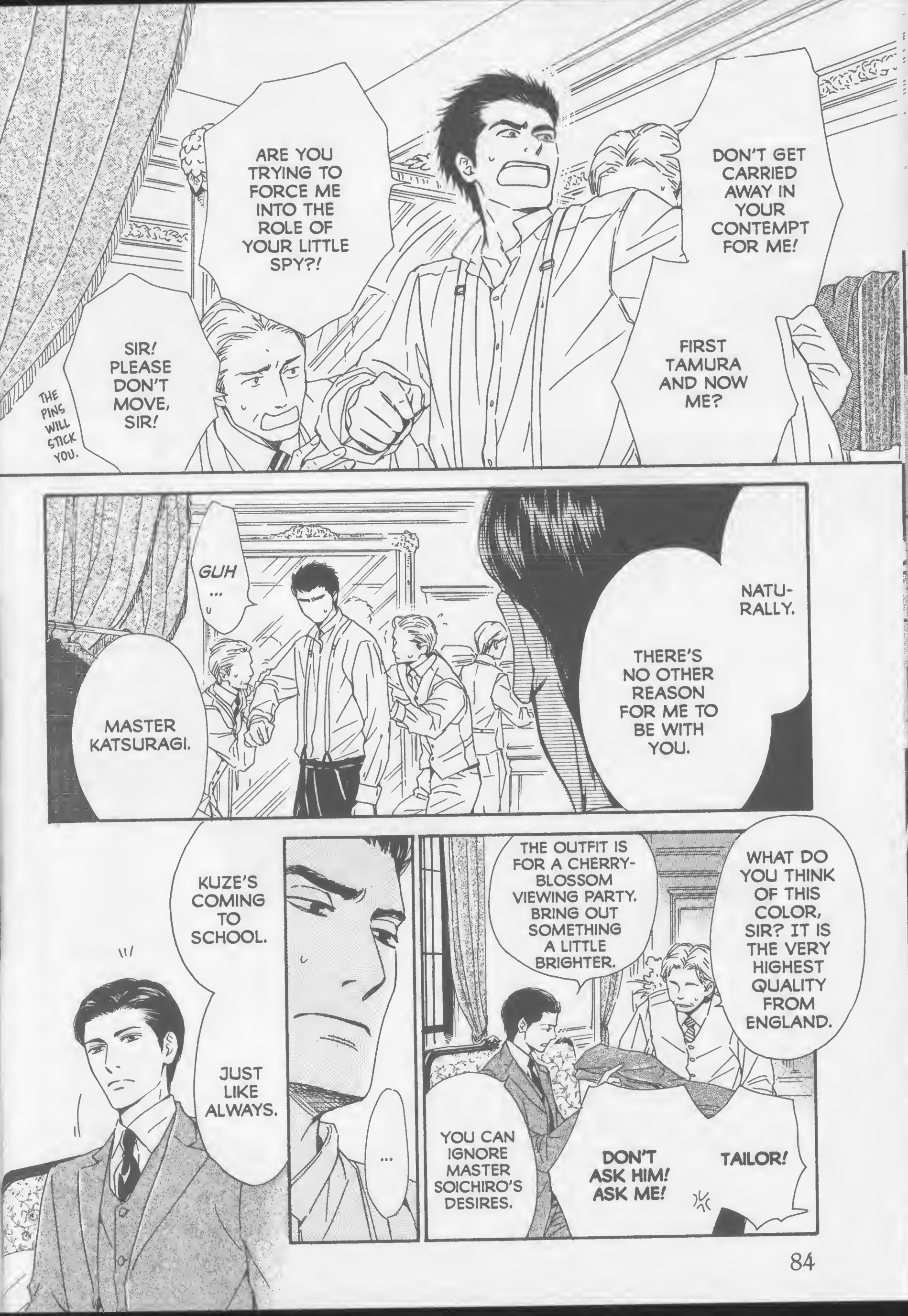

ANYWAY, NO NEED TO BE SO ANGRY ABOUT IT.
YOU'RE KNOWN AS A PHILANDERER HERE AND THERE, SURELY YOU UNDERSTAND ME?
THERE ARE JUST SOME WOMEN WHO WON'T HEAR OF IT NO MATTER HOW IMPORTANT A BUSINESS MEETING YOU HAVE.
SO, TO MEET WITH A WOMAN ...
...YOU USUALLY GO IN YOUR FORMAL DRESS AND USE YOUR CARRIAGE...
...DESPITE THE FACT THAT YOU OWN AN AUTOMOBILE, SIR?
...
WHAT ARE YOU GETTING AT?
NOTHING, SIR.
I MERELY ASK WHY YOU WOULD UTTER SUCH A FALSEHOOD.

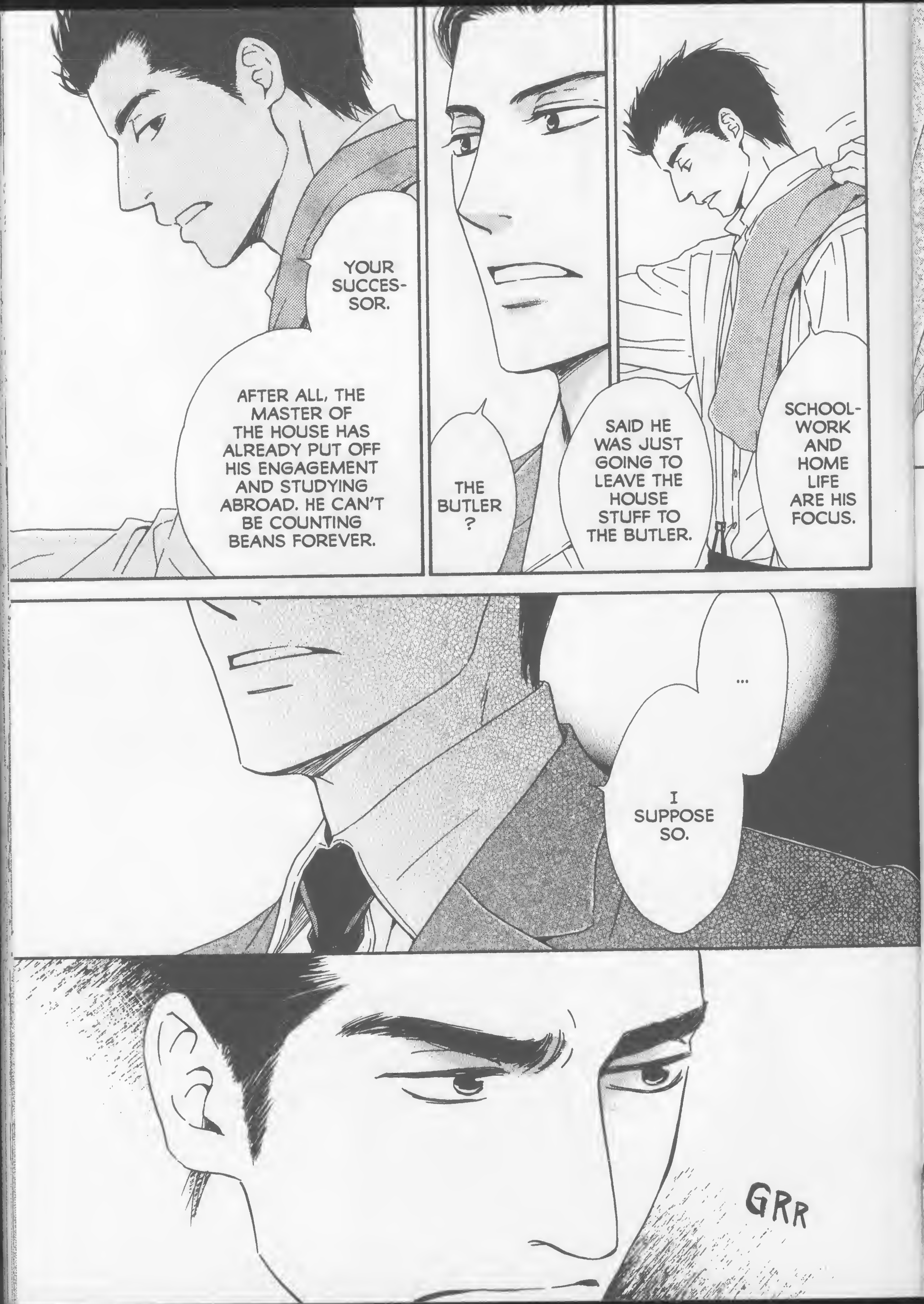

...
...AS IF HE HAS THE KUZE BLOOD FLOWING THROUGH HIM.
AKINAO KUZE...
HE WAS SUCH AN UNPLEASANT MAN.
DASHING FIGURE, GOOD BLOODLINE, A MAN WHO HAD EVERYTHING.
ALWAYS LOOKING DOWN ON ME.
ALWAYS TAKING THE INITIATIVE.
WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY?
I SAID, I'LL GIVE YOU ALL OF THESE STOCKS.
I'VE MADE A BIT TOO MUCH, IT SEEMS. I WON'T BE PLAYING THE MARKETS ANYMORE.

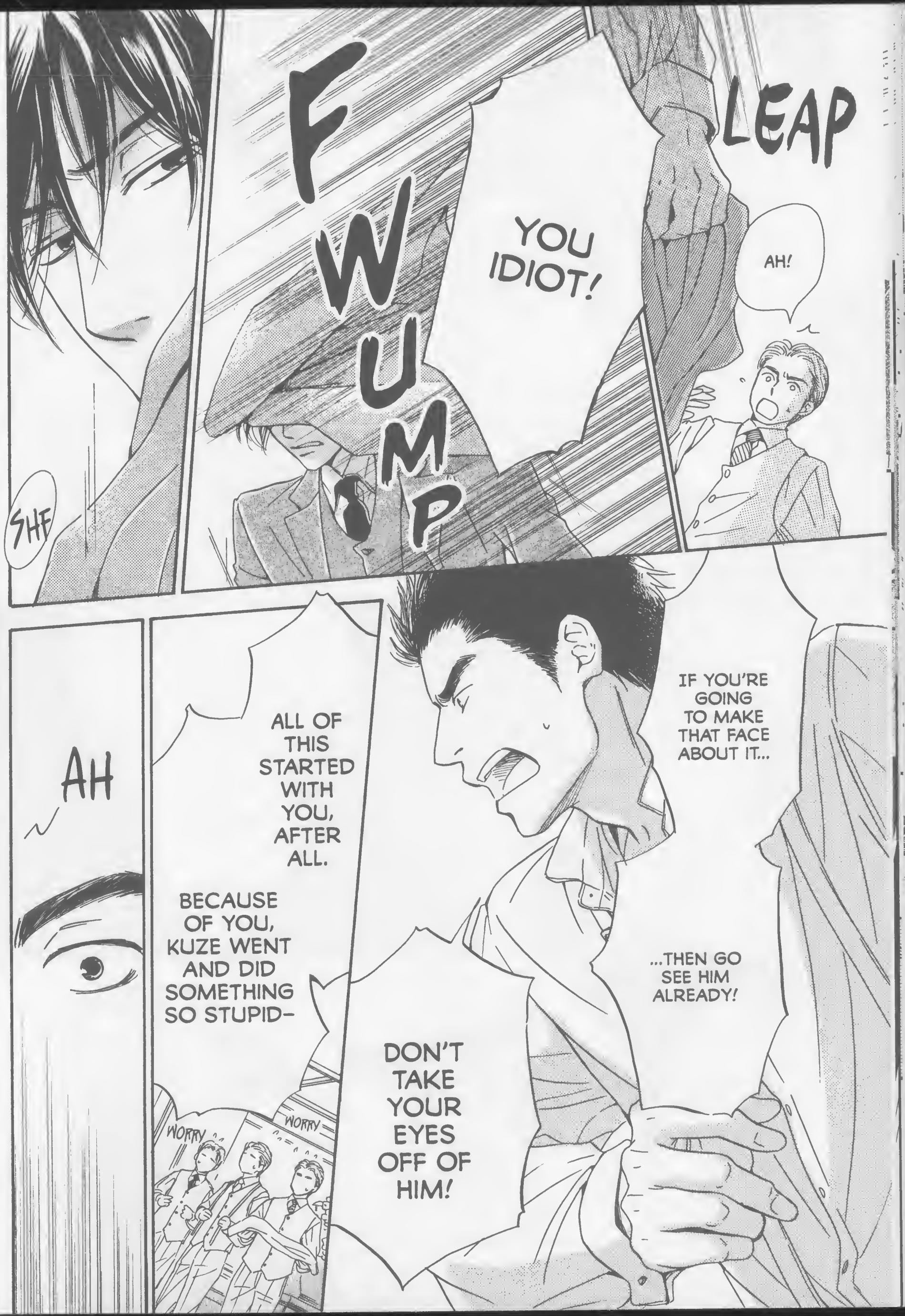

UNDERSTAND, ISHIZAKI? USE THIS MONEY TO BUY A BOAT.
PUT EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT INTO TRADE.
IT'S ACTUALLY QUITE IRONIC.
THE STOCKS AND MONEY HE GAVE ME ENDED UP BECOMING THE FOUNDATION OF THE ISHIZAKI FAMILY.
AND NOW, EVEN THE MIGHTY MARQUISE MORIYAMA COMES TO ME...
...
EVEN SO, I'VE BEEN DRAGGED INTO SOMETHING VERY ANNOYING.
MR. ISHIZAKI.
ALLOW ME TO FIRST SAY THIS.
I JOINED THE ISHIZAKI HOUSEHOLD THROUGH MASTER SOICHIRO SOLELY FOR THE SAKE OF THE KUZE FAMILY...
...TO WATCH OVER MASTER AKIHITO, THE CURRENT MASTER OF THE KUZE HOUSE, FROM THE SHADOWS.
I HAD NO OTHER MOTIVATION.
KLATTER
...

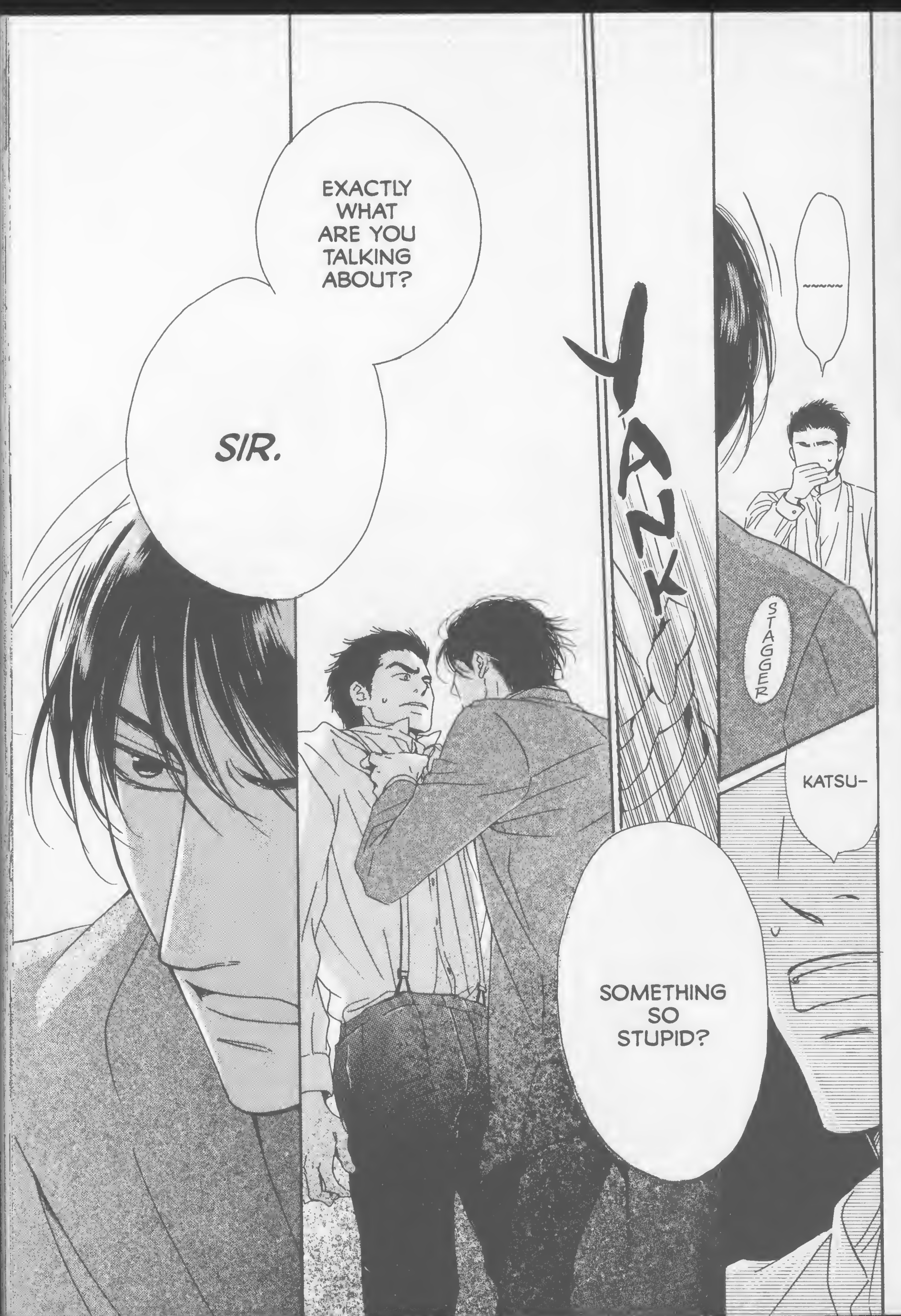

THE LETTERS FROM TAMURA HAVE CEASED.
...
KATSU-RAGI...
BUT I'M SURE YOU'RE AWARE OF HOW MASTER AKIHITO IS DOING?


AKIHITO KUZE AND TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI...
THEY BOTH CHOSE ME RATHER THAN MARQUISE MORIYAMA.
ALTHOUGH THEIR POSITIONS ARE DIFFERENT, THEIR THINKING IS EXACTLY THE SAME.
SHF
IF THIS IS HANDLED POORLY, THE KUZE FAMILY WILL CEASE TO EXIST.
WHAT KIND OF END IS MOST SUITABLE FOR THOSE TWO?

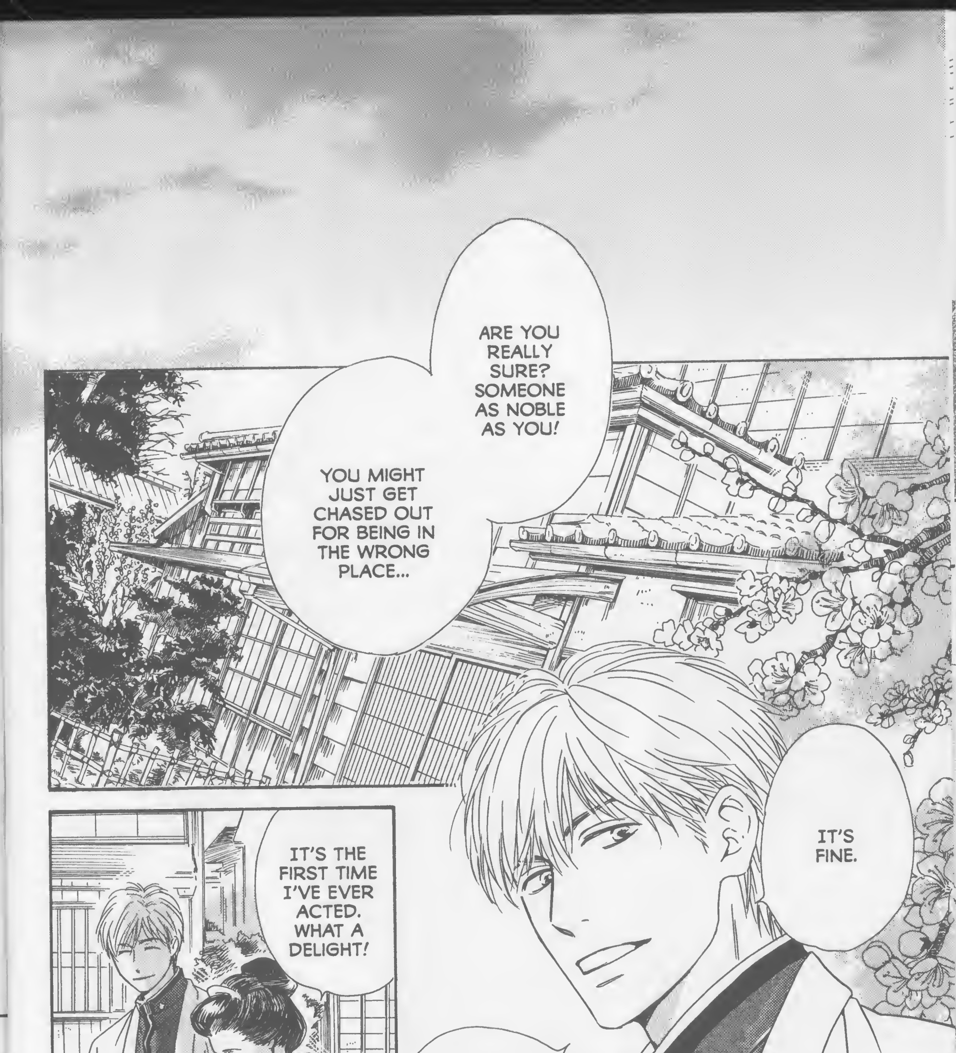

DON'T GET CARRIED AWAY IN YOUR CONTEMPT FOR ME!
FIRST TAMURA AND NOW ME?
ARE YOU TRYING TO FORCE ME INTO THE ROLE OF YOUR LITTLE SPY?!
SIR! PLEASE DON'T MOVE, SIR!
THE PINS WILL STICK YOU.
NATURALLY.
THERE'S NO OTHER REASON FOR ME TO BE WITH YOU.
GUH...
MASTER KATSURAGI.
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS COLOR, SIR? IT IS THE VERY HIGHEST QUALITY FROM ENGLAND.
TAILOR!
DON'T ASK HIM! ASK ME!
THE OUTFIT IS FOR A CHERRY-BLOSSOM VIEWING PARTY. BRING OUT SOMETHING A LITTLE BRIGHTER.
YOU CAN IGNORE MASTER SOICHIRO'S DESIRES.
...
KUZE'S COMING TO SCHOOL.
JUST LIKE ALWAYS.

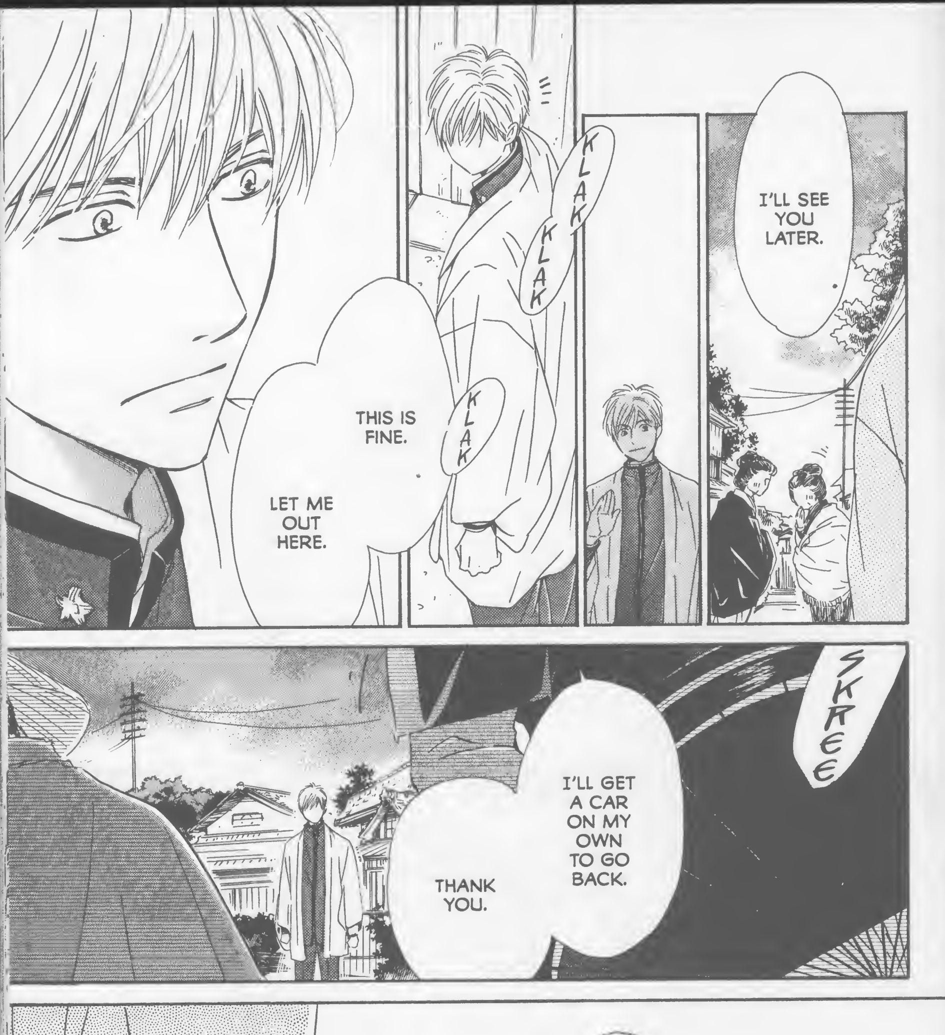

SCHOOLWORK AND HOME LIFE ARE HIS FOCUS.
SAID HE WAS JUST GOING TO LEAVE THE HOUSE STUFF TO THE BUTLER.
THE BUTLER?
YOUR SUCCESSOR.
AFTER ALL, THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE HAS ALREADY PUT OFF HIS ENGAGEMENT AND STUDYING ABROAD. HE CAN'T BE COUNTING BEANS FOREVER.
...
I SUPPOSE SO.
GRR

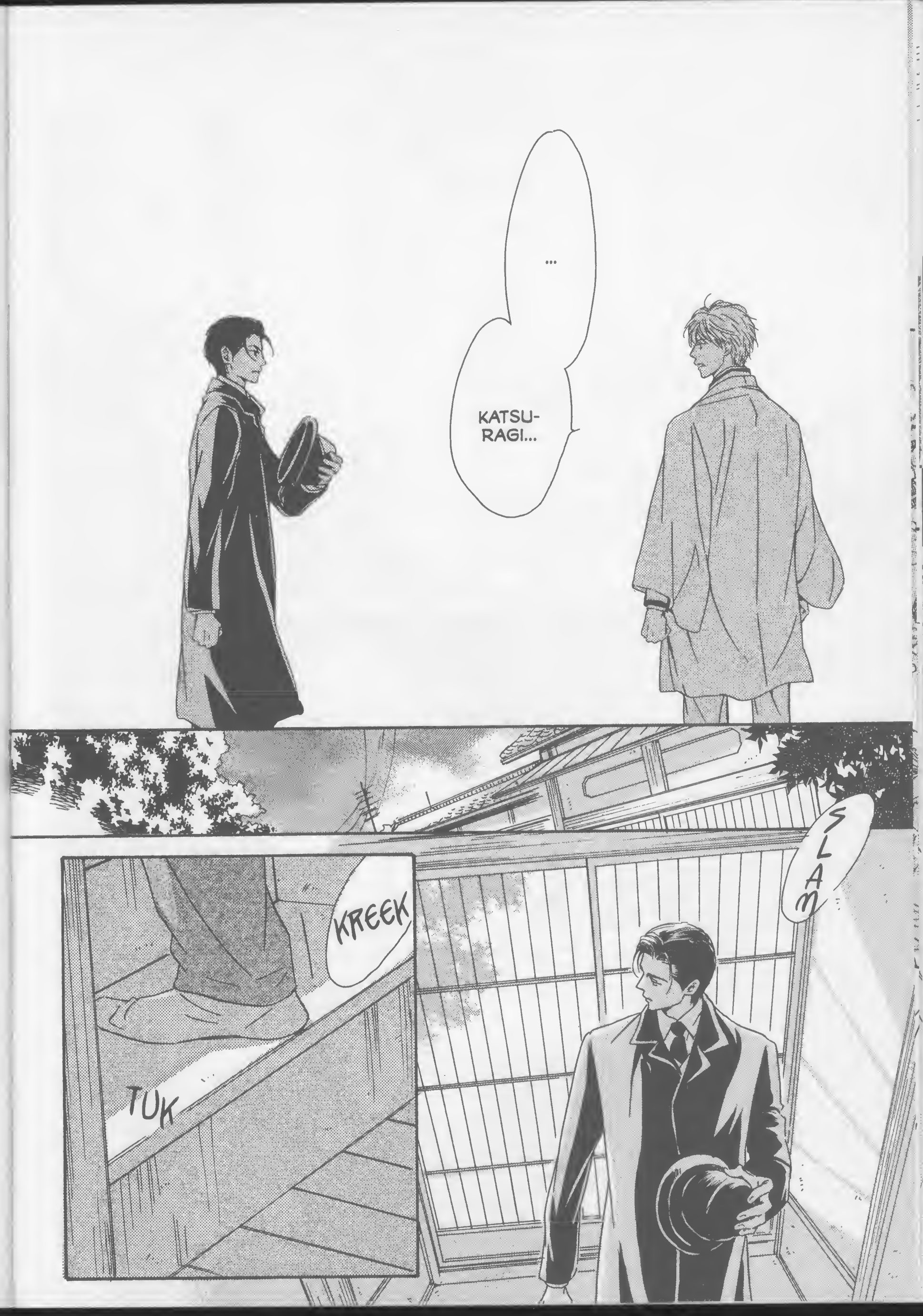

LEAP
AH!
YOU IDIOT!
FWUMP
SHF
IF YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE THAT FACE ABOUT IT...
...THEN GO SEE HIM ALREADY!
ALL OF THIS STARTED WITH YOU, AFTER ALL.
BECAUSE OF YOU, KUZE WENT AND DID SOMETHING SO STUPID–
DON'T TAKE YOUR EYES OFF OF HIM!
WORRY
WORRY
AH

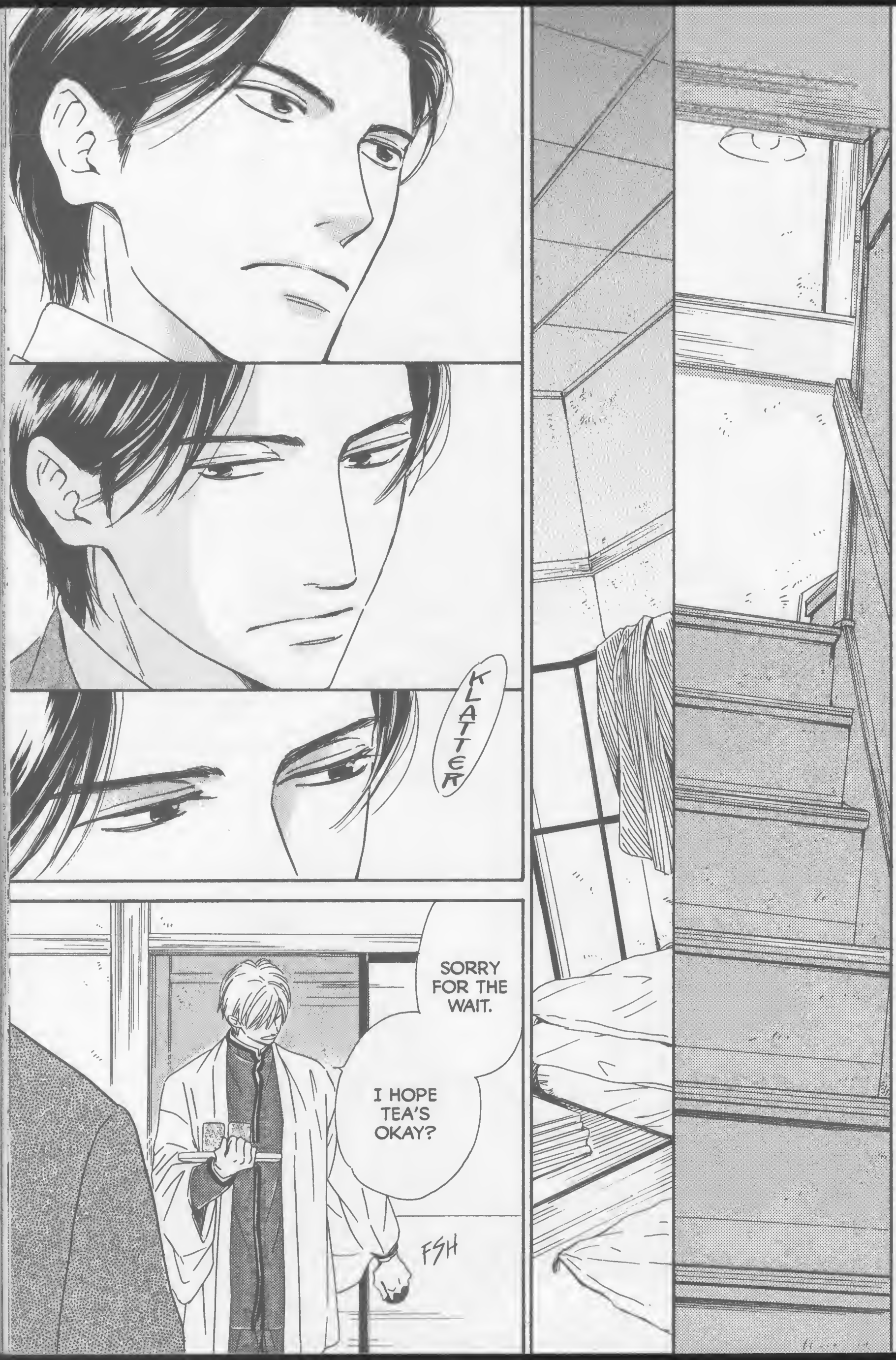


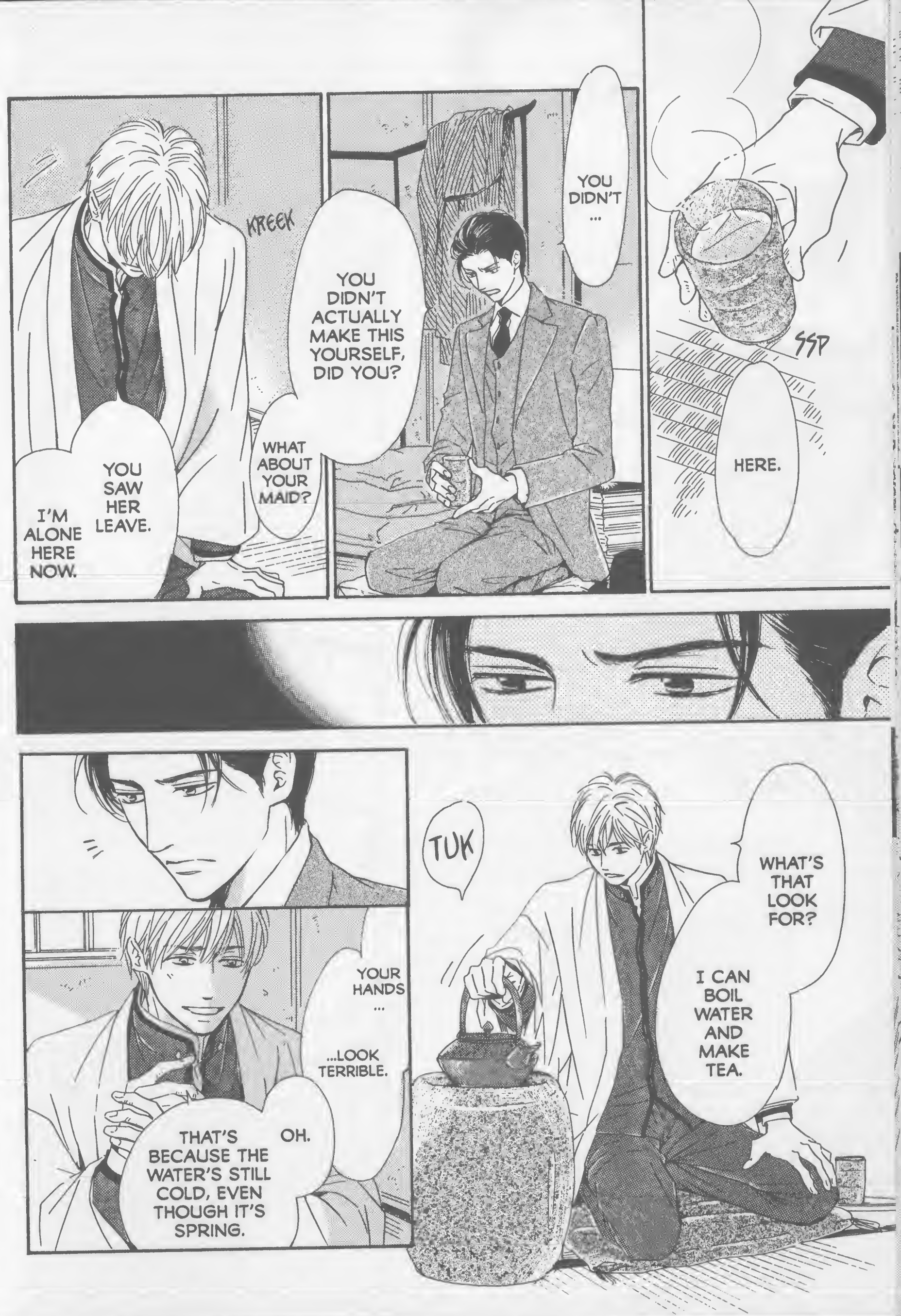
~~~~~
STAGGER
KATSU–
SOMETHING SO STUPID?
YANK
EXACTLY WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
SIR.
~~~~~

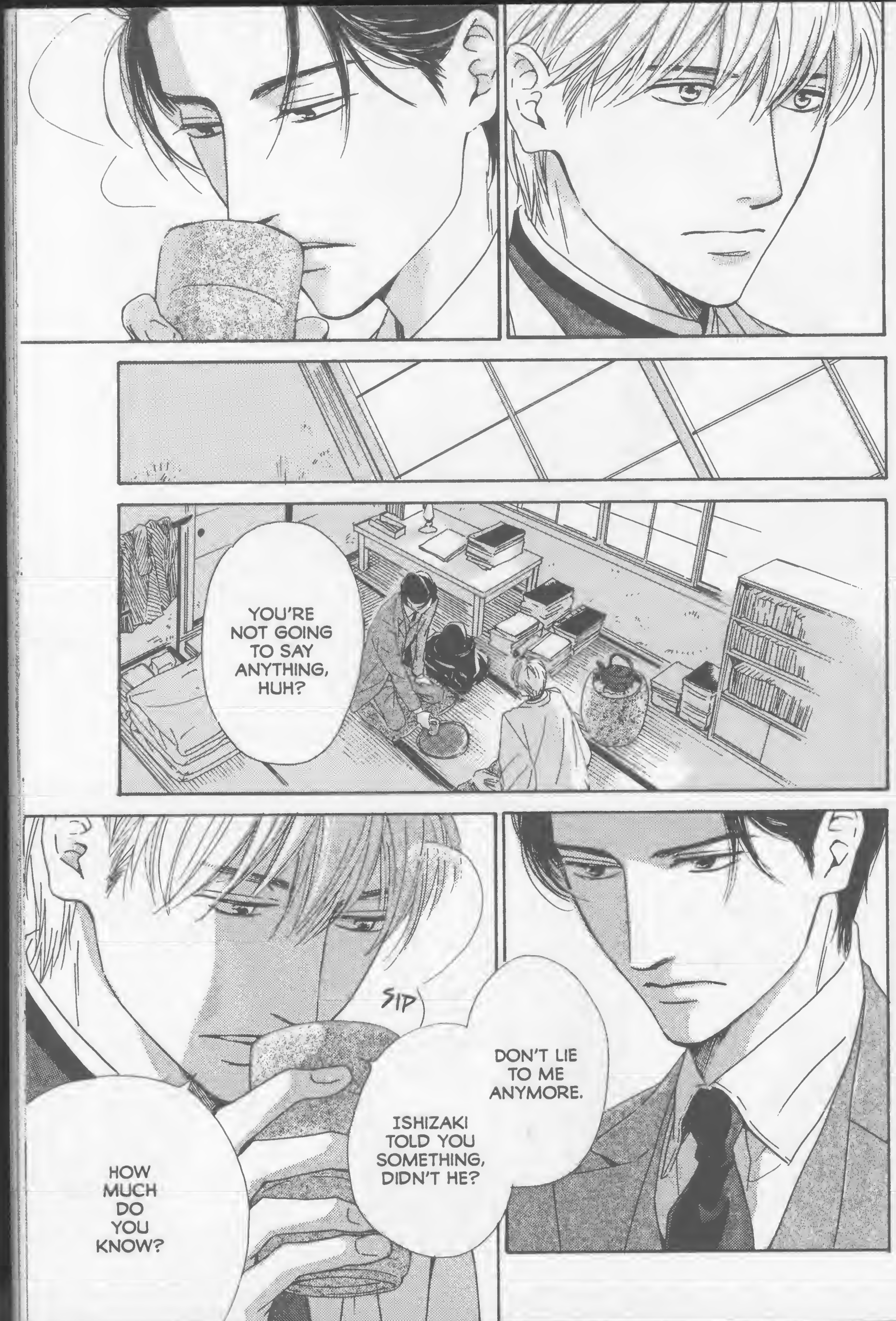

ARE YOU REALLY SURE? SOMEONE AS NOBLE AS YOU!
YOU MIGHT JUST GET CHASED OUT FOR BEING IN THE WRONG PLACE...
IT'S FINE.
IF YOU AND THE OTHERS HADN'T COME, OTOMI, THIS ALL WOULD'VE BEEN A DISASTER.
IT'S THE FIRST TIME I'VE EVER ACTED. WHAT A DELIGHT!
WELL THEN, I SUPPOSE I'LL ACCEPT.
GOOD.

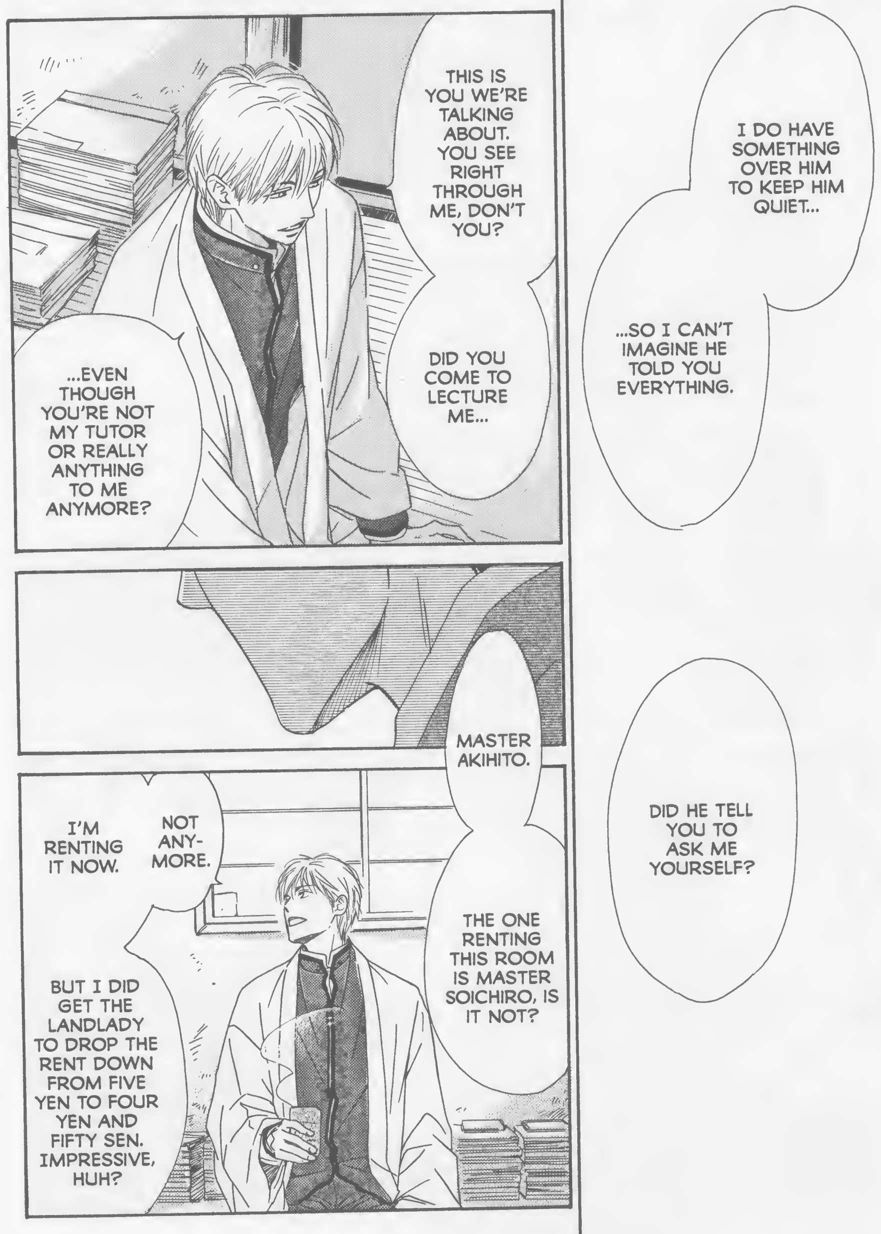

I'LL SEE YOU LATER.
KLAK KLAK KLAK
KLAK
THIS IS FINE.
LET ME OUT HERE.
SKREE
I'LL GET A CAR ON MY OWN TO GO BACK.
THANK YOU.
JANGLE

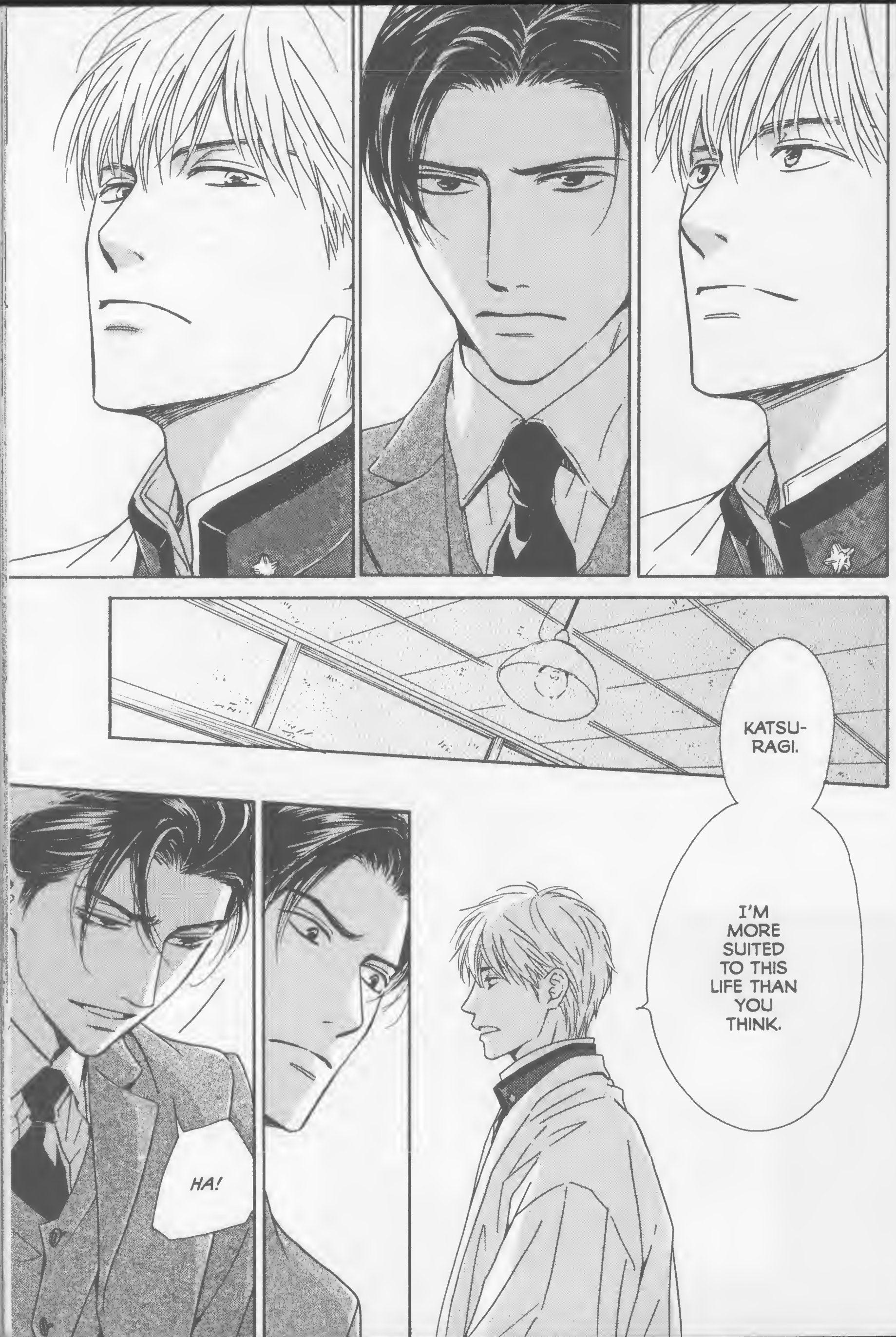

...
KATSU-RAGI...
SLAM
KREEK
TUK

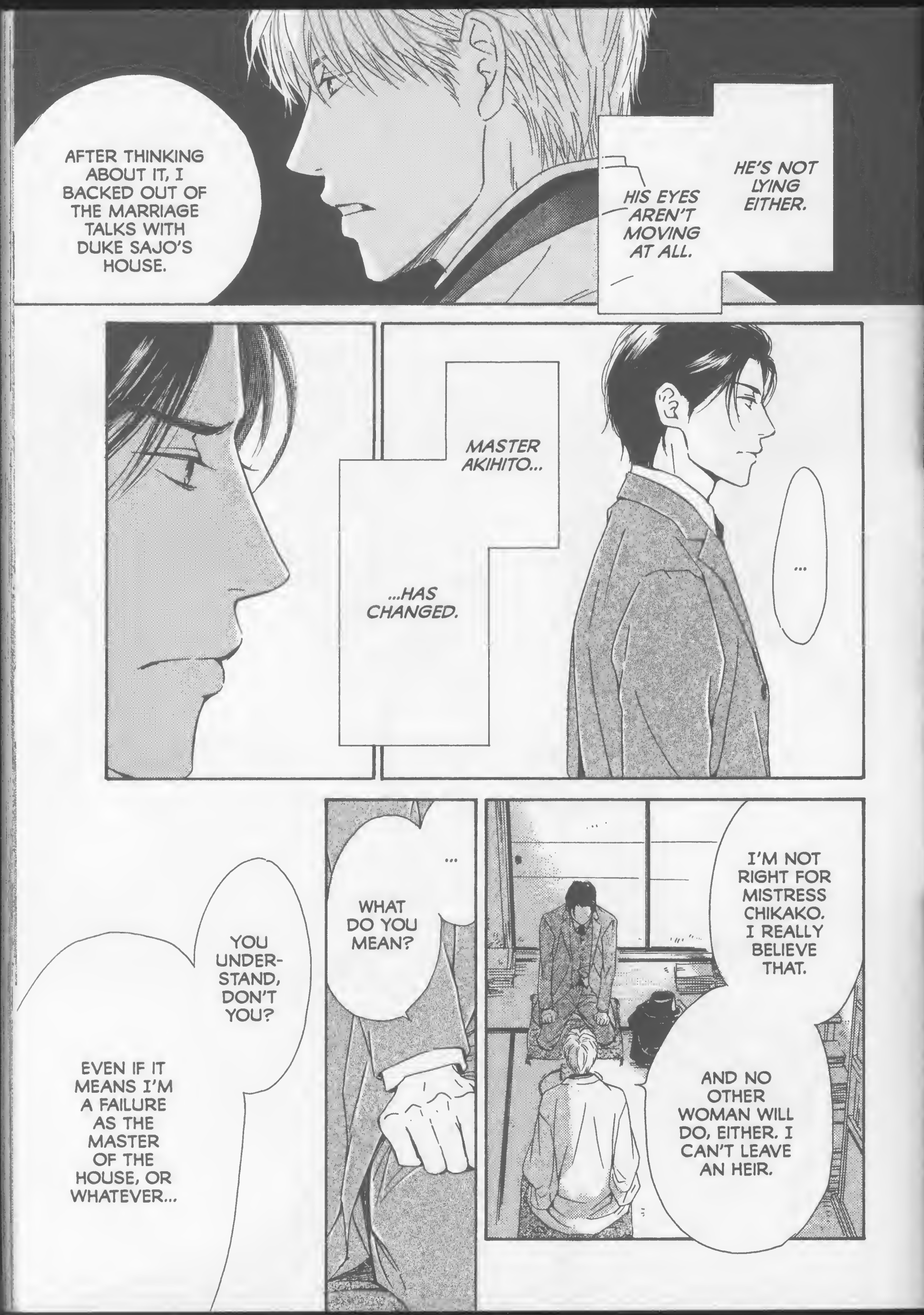
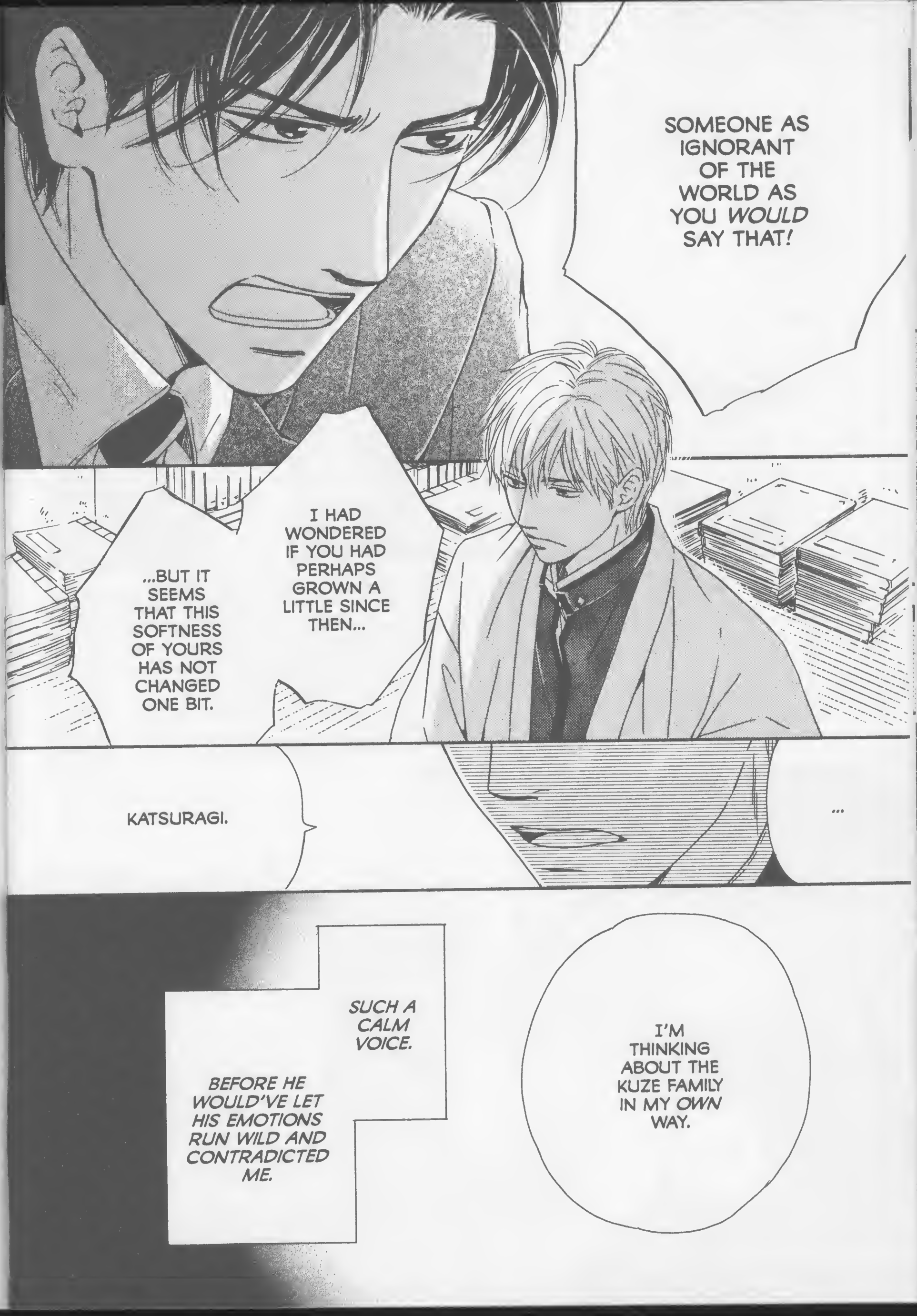

KLATTER
SORRY FOR THE WAIT.
I HOPE TEA'S OKAY?
FSH

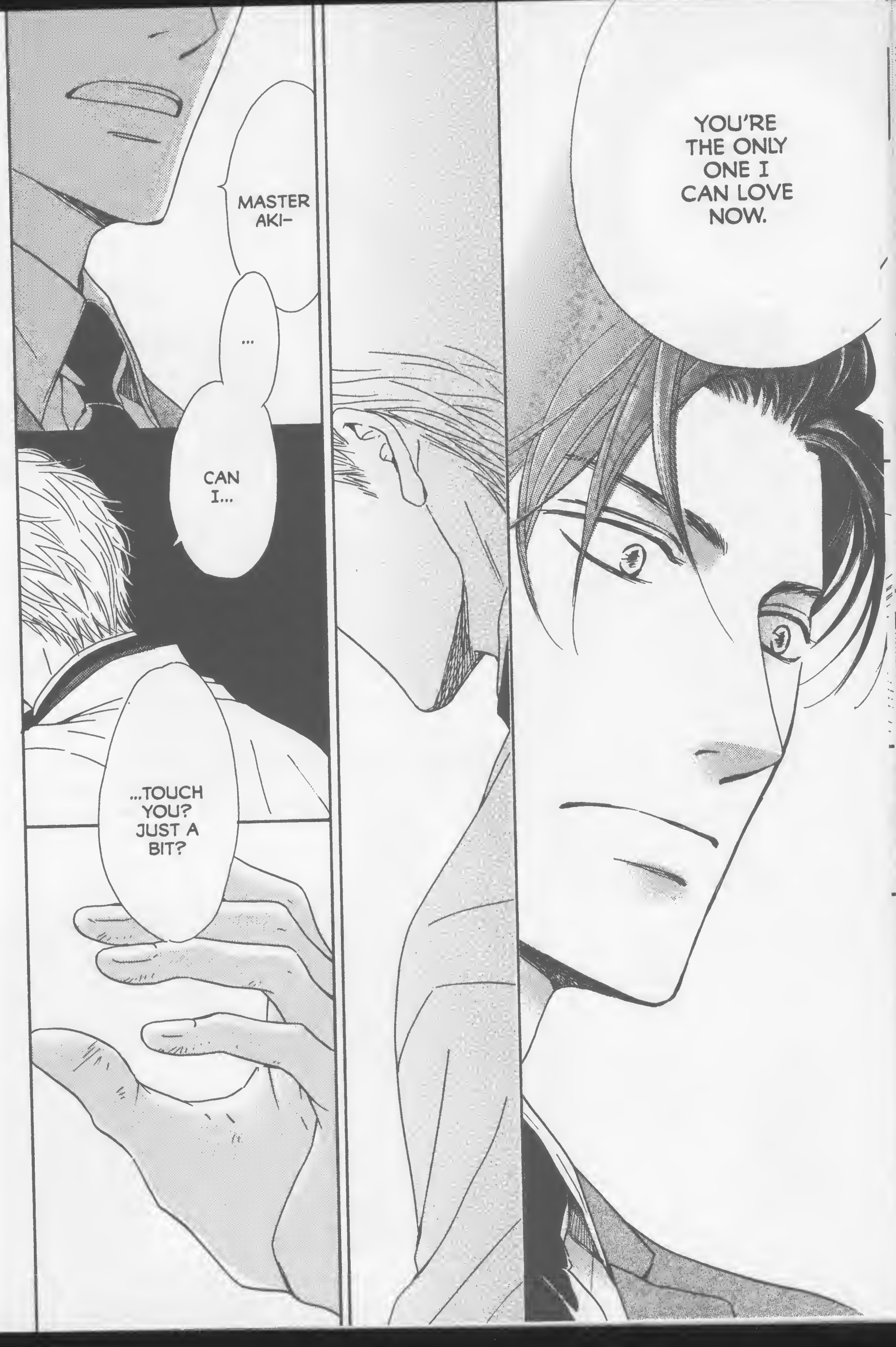

YOU DIDN'T ...
SSP
HERE.
KREEK
YOU DIDN'T ACTUALLY MAKE THIS YOURSELF, DID YOU?
WHAT ABOUT YOUR MAID?
YOU SAW HER LEAVE.
I'M ALONE HERE NOW.
TUK
WHAT'S THAT LOOK FOR?
I CAN BOIL WATER AND MAKE TEA.
YOUR HANDS ...
...LOOK TERRIBLE.
OH.
THAT'S BECAUSE THE WATER'S STILL COLD, EVEN THOUGH IT'S SPRING.

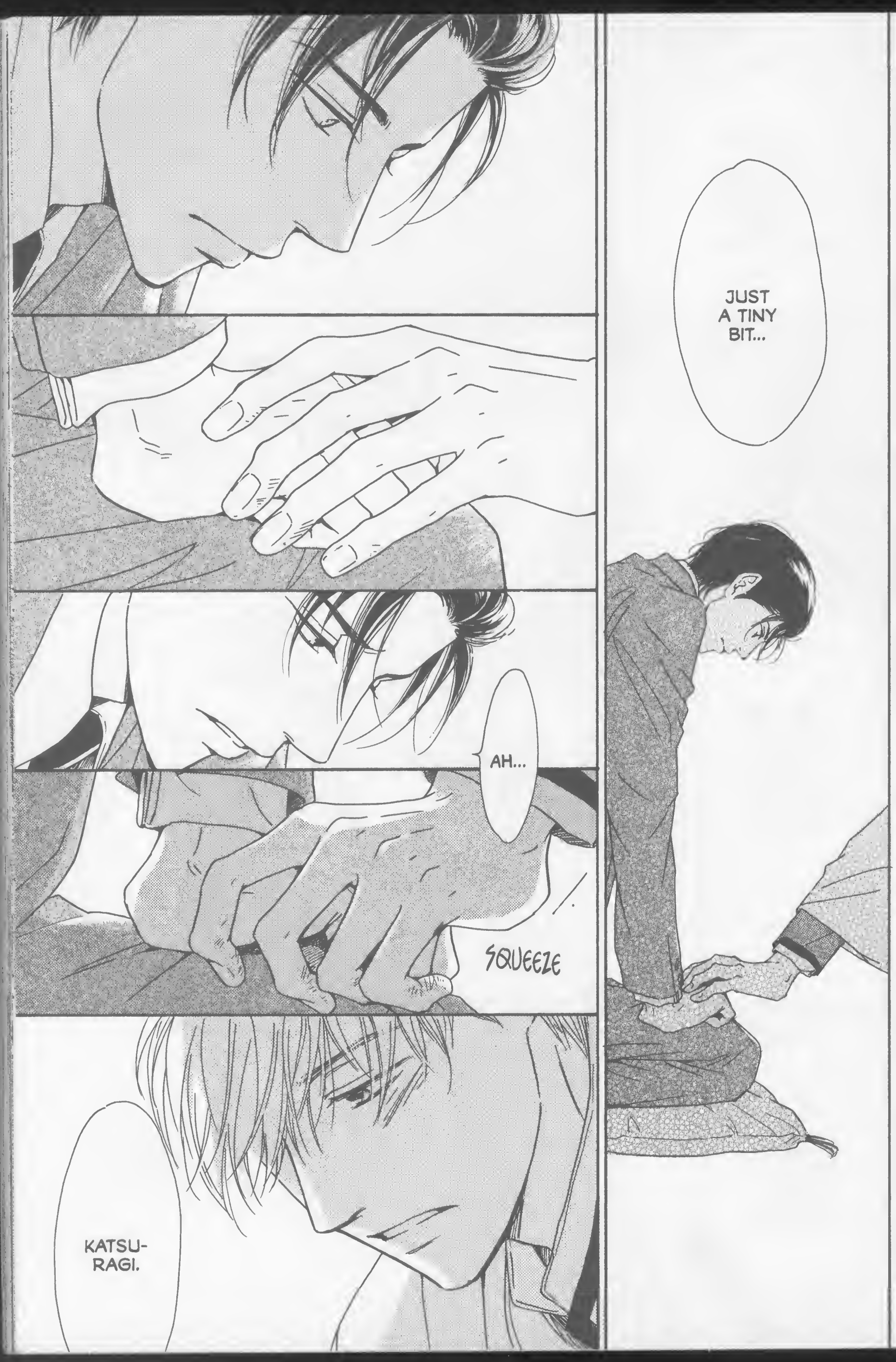

YOU'RE NOT GOING TO SAY ANYTHING, HUH?
DON'T LIE TO ME ANYMORE.
ISHIZAKI TOLD YOU SOMETHING, DIDN'T HE?
SIP
HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW?

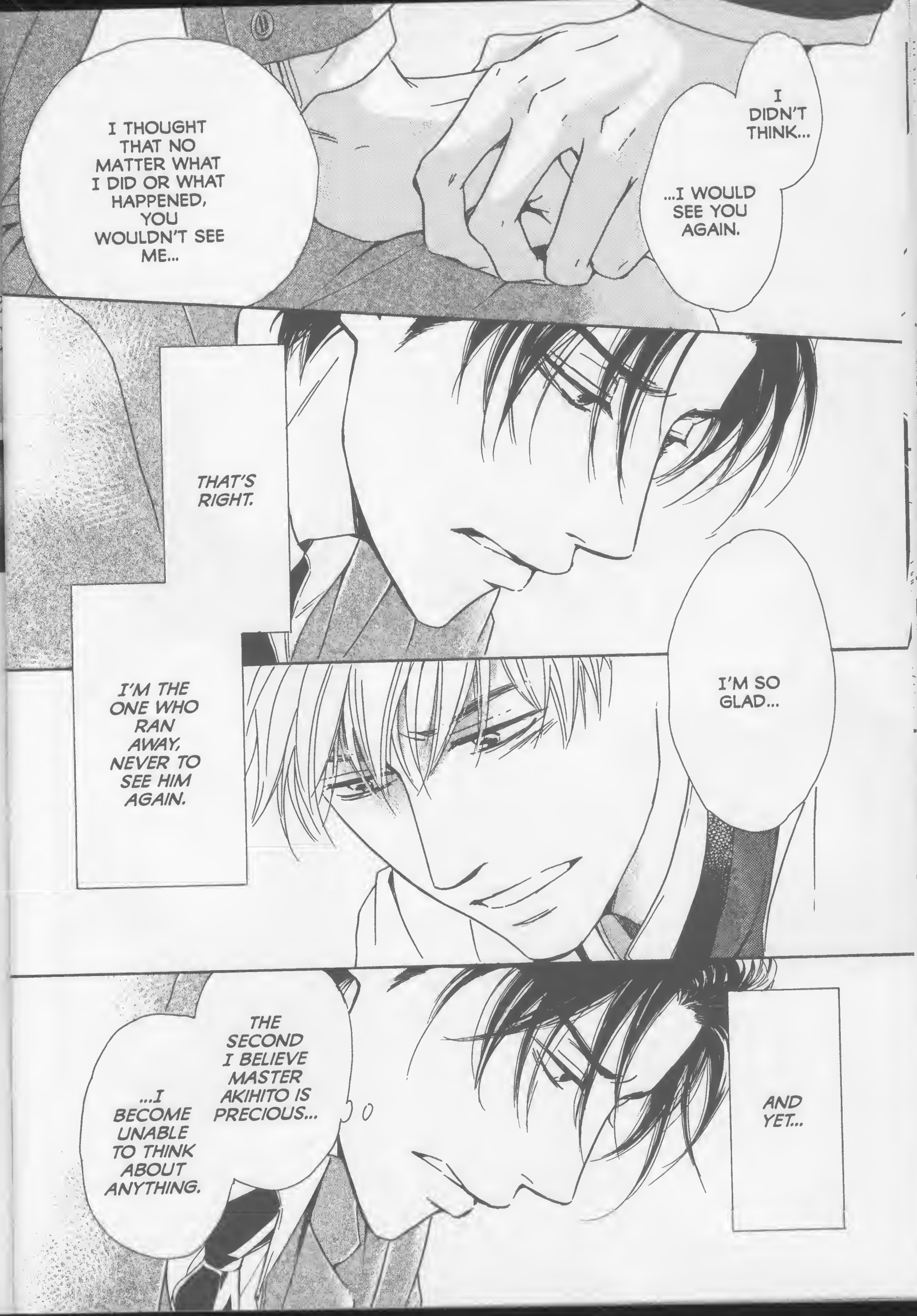

I DO HAVE SOMETHING OVER HIM TO KEEP HIM QUIET...
...SO I CAN'T IMAGINE HE TOLD YOU EVERYTHING.
THIS IS YOU WE'RE TALKING ABOUT. YOU SEE RIGHT THROUGH ME, DON'T YOU?
DID YOU COME TO LECTURE ME...
...EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE NOT MY TUTOR OR REALLY ANYTHING TO ME ANYMORE?
DID HE TELL YOU TO ASK ME YOURSELF?
MASTER AKIHITO.
THE ONE RENTING THIS ROOM IS MASTER SOICHIRO, IS IT NOT?
NOT ANYMORE.
I'M RENTING IT NOW.
BUT I DID GET THE LANDLADY TO DROP THE RENT DOWN FROM FIVE YEN TO FOUR YEN AND FIFTY SEN. IMPRESSIVE, HUH?

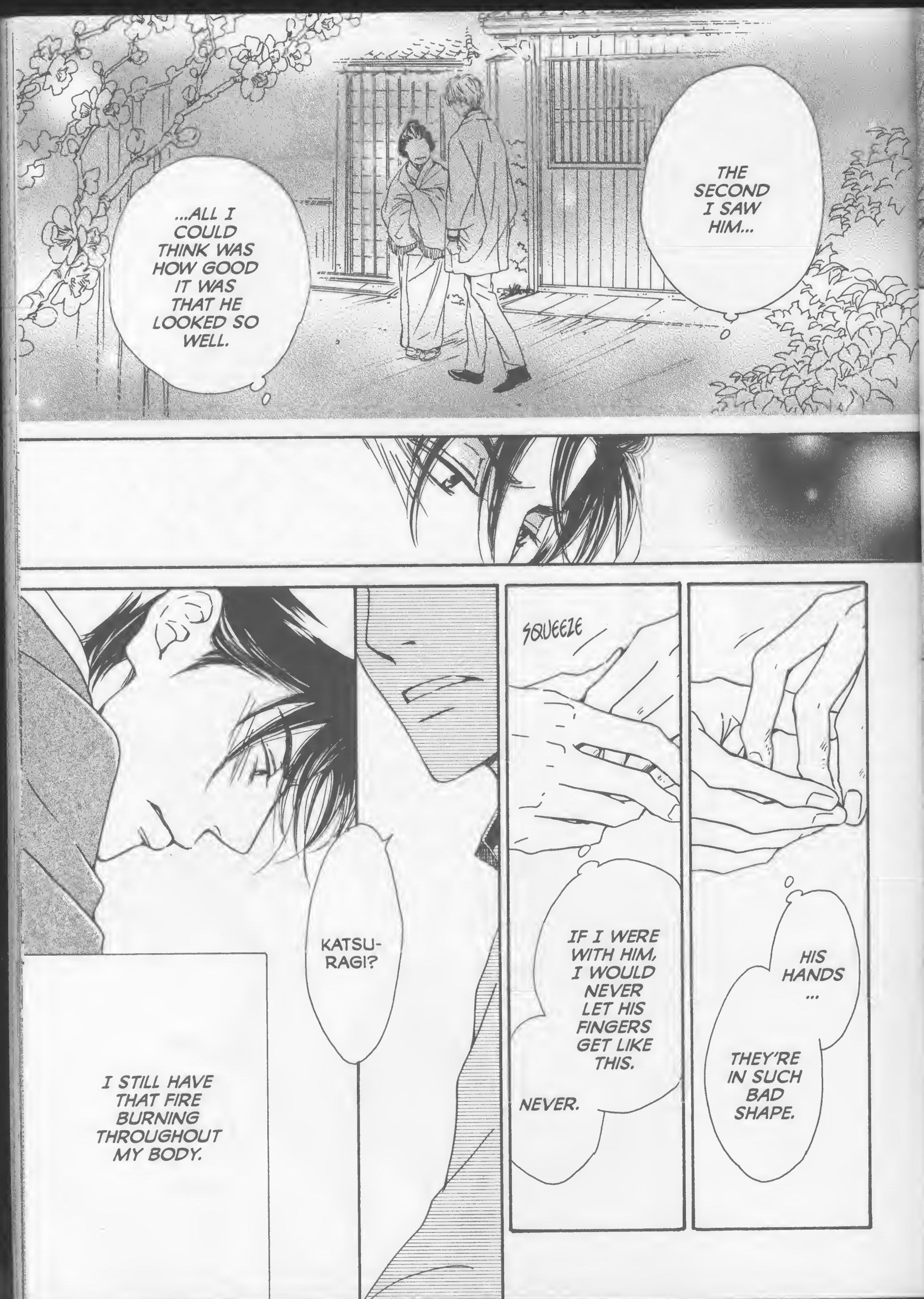

KATSU-RAGI.
I'M MORE SUITED TO THIS LIFE THAN YOU THINK.
HA!

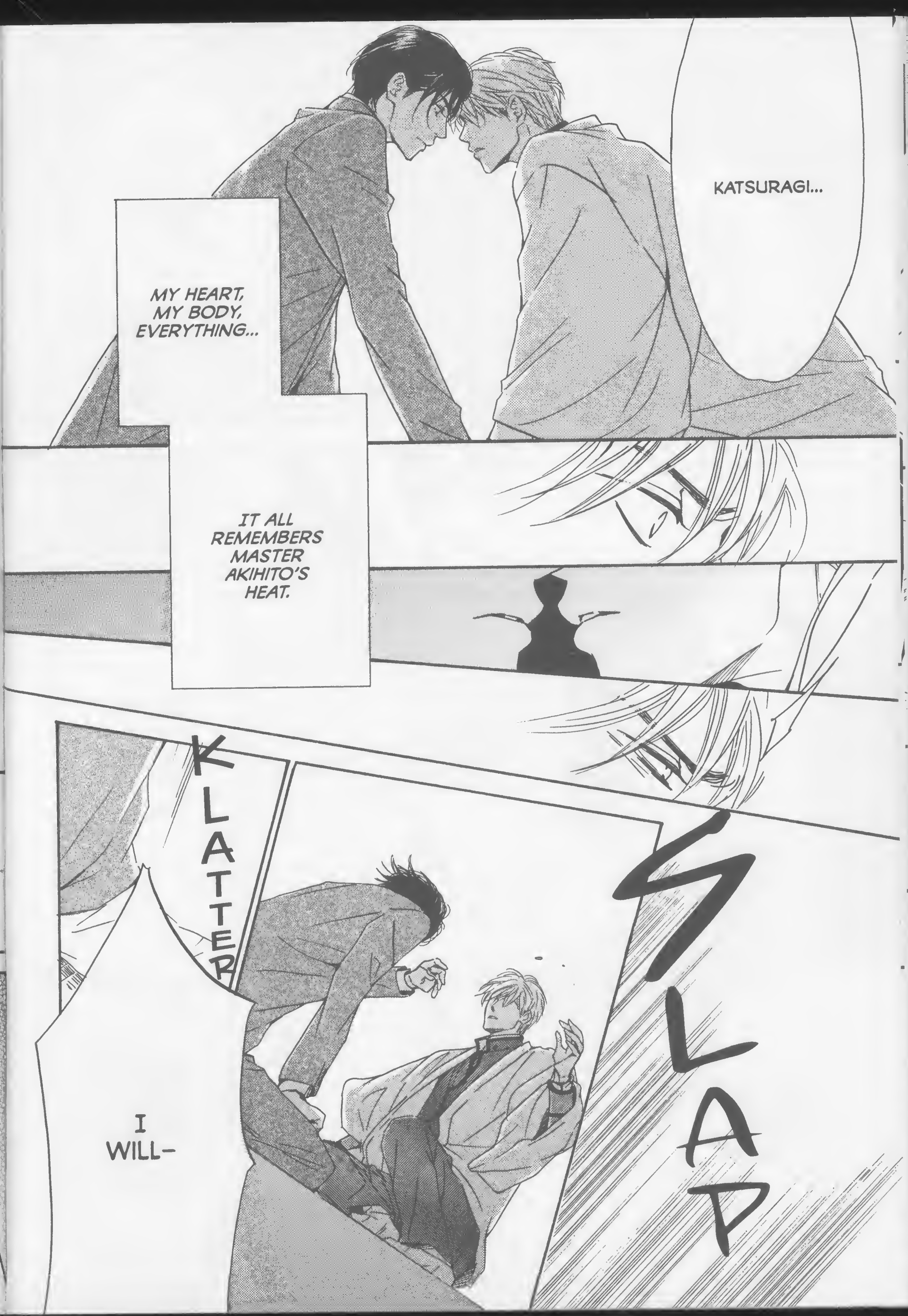

AFTER THINKING ABOUT IT, I BACKED OUT OF THE MARRIAGE TALKS WITH DUKE SAJO'S HOUSE.
HIS EYES AREN'T MOVING AT ALL.
HE'S NOT LYING EITHER.
MASTER AKIHITO...
...HAS CHANGED.
...
I'M NOT RIGHT FOR MISTRESS CHIKAKO. I REALLY BELIEVE THAT.
AND NO OTHER WOMAN WILL DO, EITHER. I CAN'T LEAVE AN HEIR.
...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
YOU UNDERSTAND, DON'T YOU?
EVEN IF IT MEANS I'M A FAILURE AS THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE, OR WHATEVER...

SOMEONE AS IGNORANT OF THE WORLD AS YOU WOULD SAY THAT!
I HAD WONDERED IF YOU HAD PERHAPS GROWN A LITTLE SINCE THEN...
...BUT IT SEEMS THAT THIS SOFTNESS OF YOURS HAS NOT CHANGED ONE BIT.
KATSURAGI.
...
I'M THINKING ABOUT THE KUZE FAMILY IN MY OWN WAY.
SUCH A CALM VOICE.
BEFORE HE WOULD'VE LET HIS EMOTIONS RUN WILD AND CONTRADICTED ME.

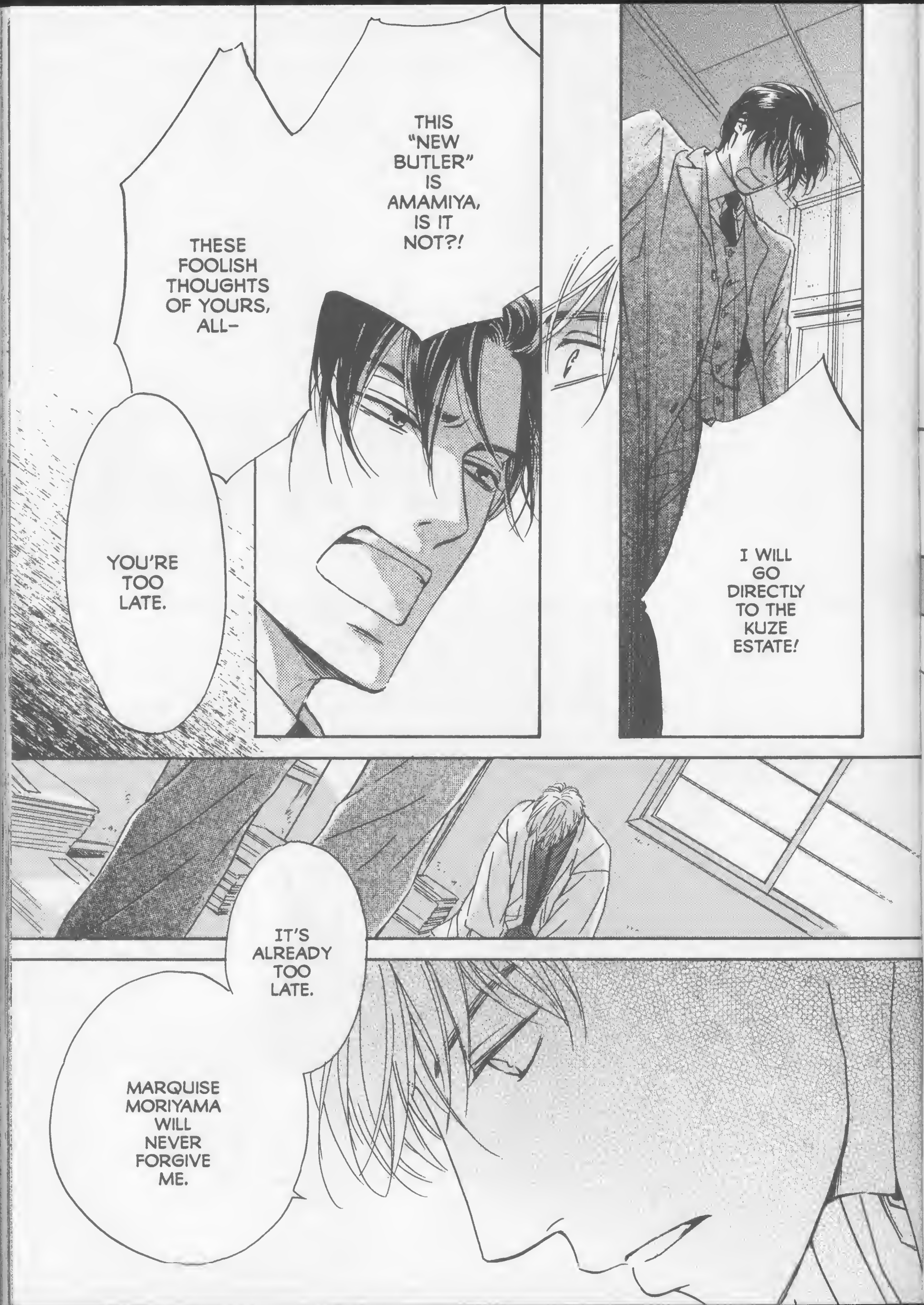

YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE I CAN LOVE NOW.
MASTER AKI-
...
CAN I...
...TOUCH YOU? JUST A BIT?

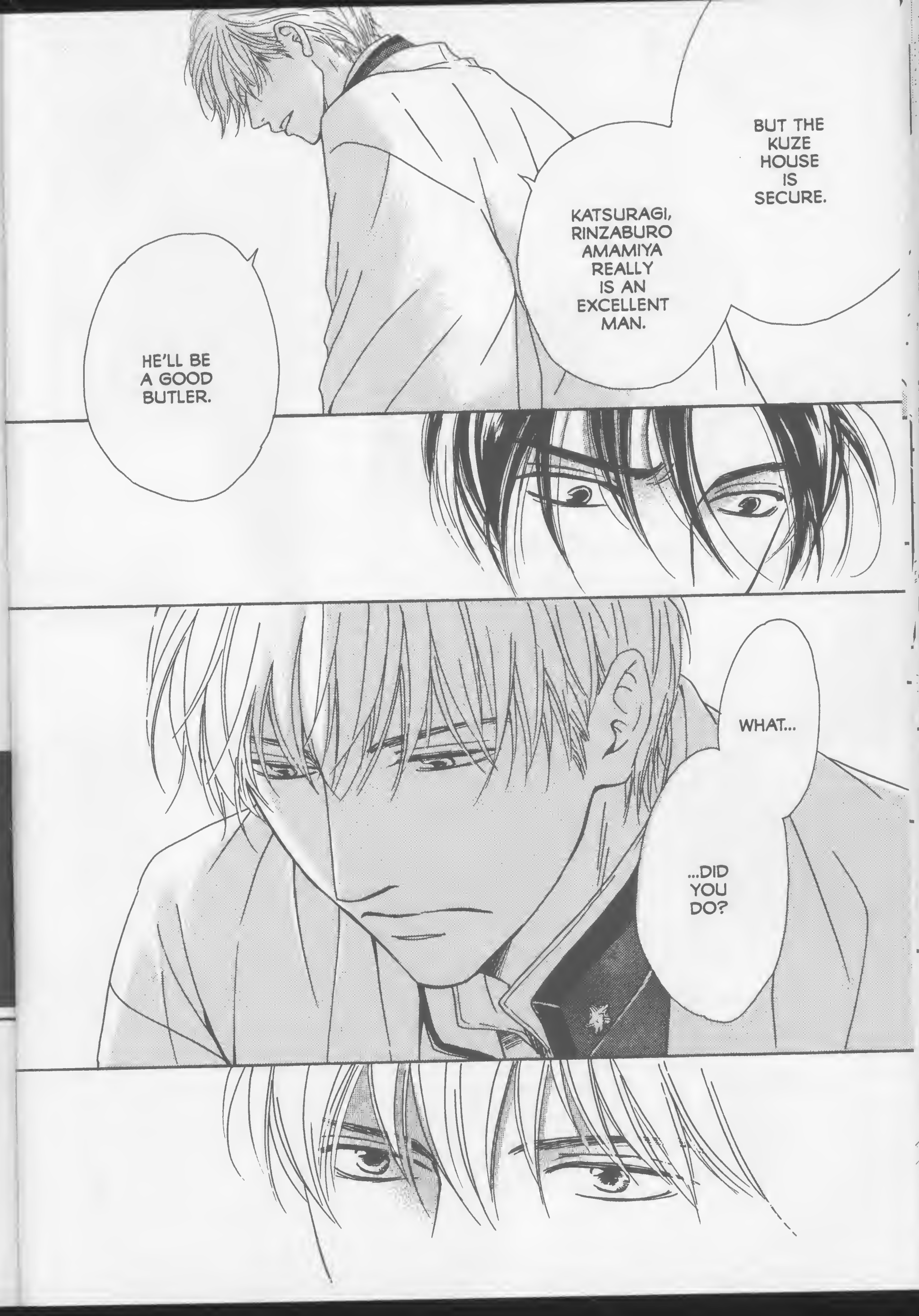

JUST A TINY BIT...
AH...
SQUEEZE
KATSU-RAGI.

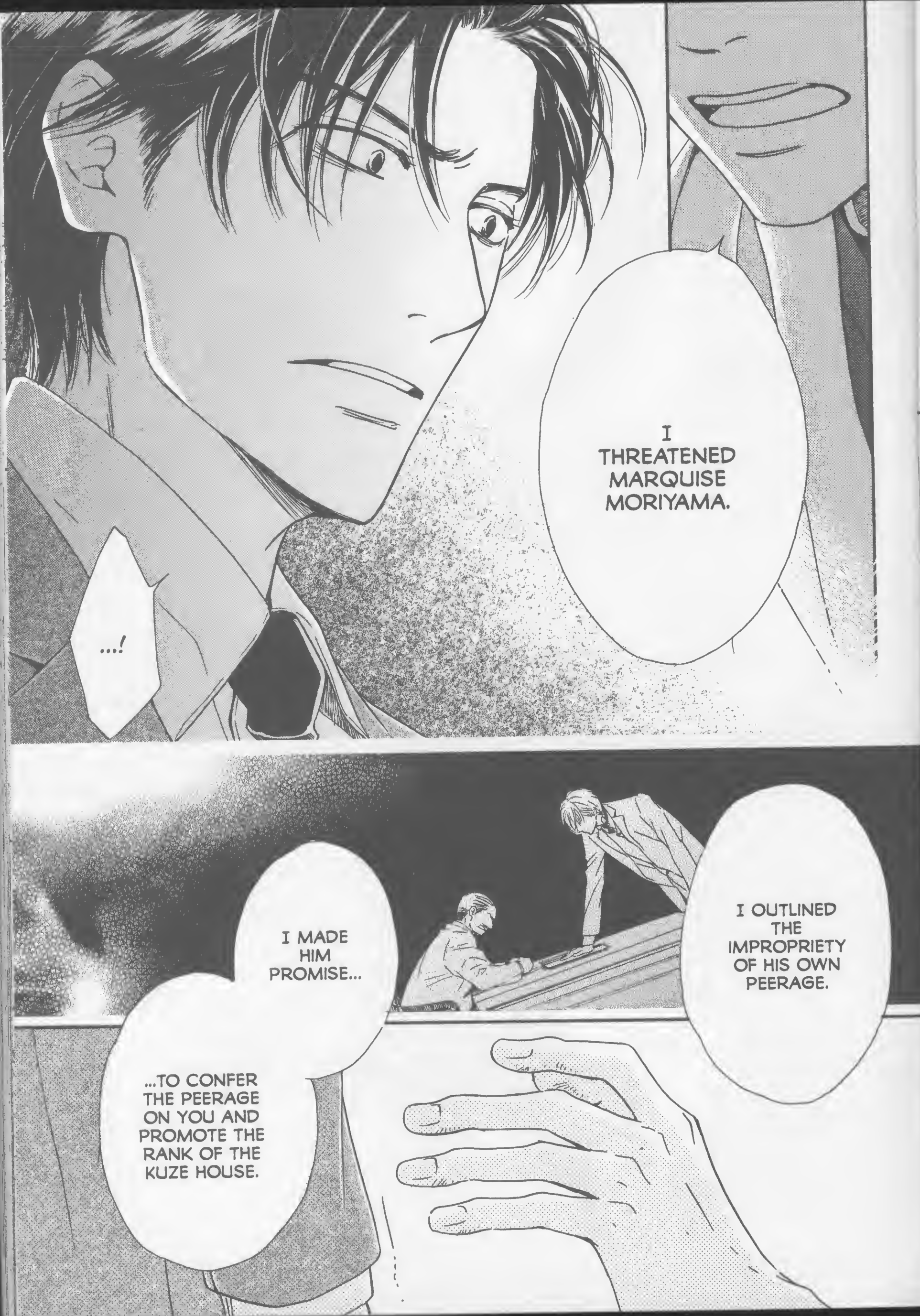

I DIDN'T THINK...
...I WOULD SEE YOU AGAIN.
I THOUGHT THAT NO MATTER WHAT I DID OR WHAT HAPPENED, YOU WOULDN'T SEE ME...
THAT'S RIGHT.
I'M SO GLAD...
I'M THE ONE WHO RAN AWAY, NEVER TO SEE HIM AGAIN.
AND YET...
THE SECOND I BELIEVE MASTER AKIHITO IS PRECIOUS...
...I BECOME UNABLE TO THINK ABOUT ANYTHING.

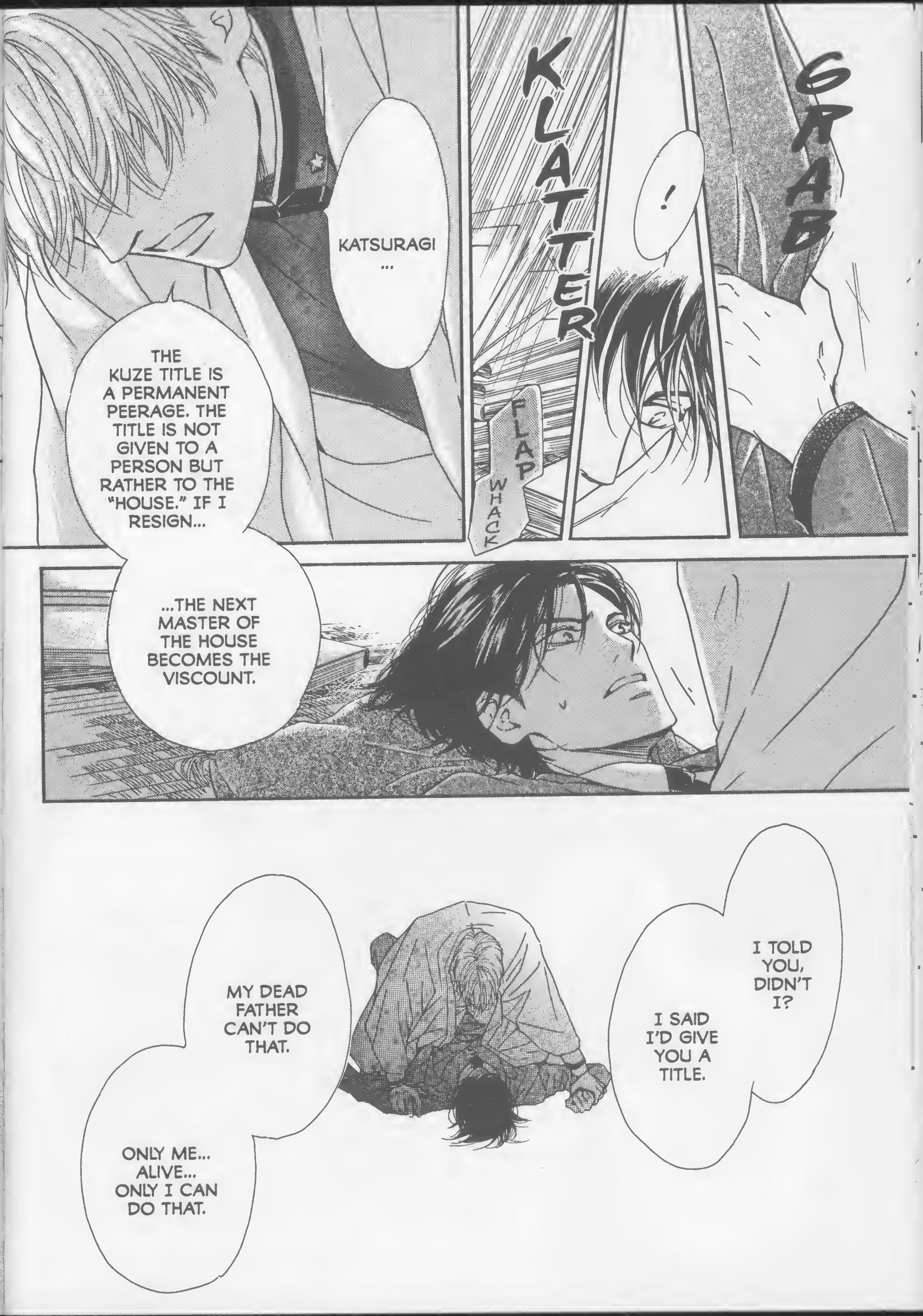

THE SECOND I SAW HIM...
...ALL I COULD THINK WAS HOW GOOD IT WAS THAT HE LOOKED SO WELL.
HIS HANDS...
THEY'RE IN SUCH BAD SHAPE.
SQUEEZE
IF I WERE WITH HIM, I WOULD NEVER LET HIS FINGERS GET LIKE THIS.
NEVER.
KATSU-RAGI?
I STILL HAVE THAT FIRE BURNING THROUGHOUT MY BODY.

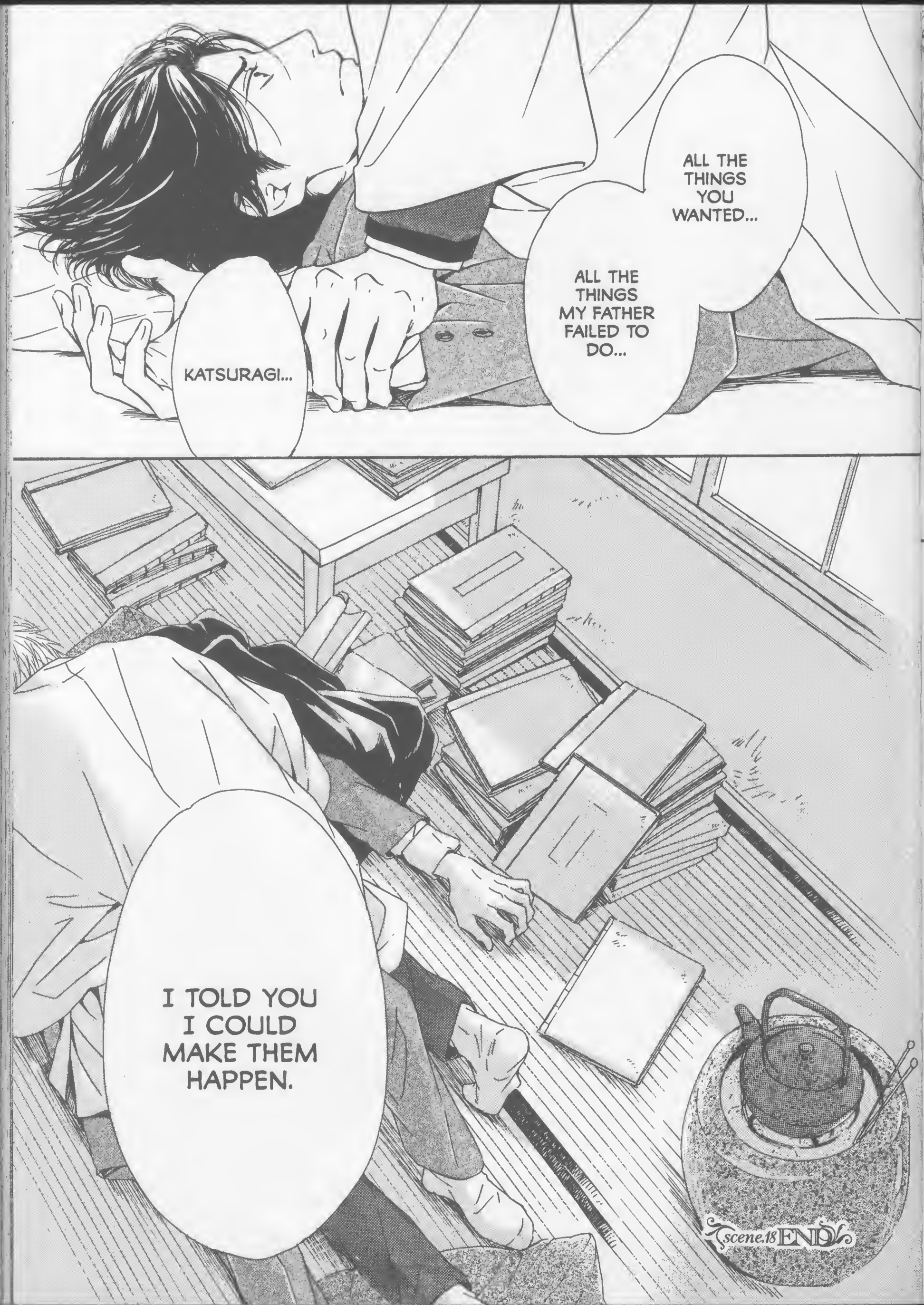

KATSURAGI...
MY HEART, MY BODY, EVERYTHING...
IT ALL REMEMBERS MASTER AKIHITO'S HEAT.
SLAP
KLATTER
I WILL-


I WILL GO DIRECTLY TO THE KUZE ESTATE!
THIS "NEW BUTLER" IS AMAMIYA, IS IT NOT?!
THESE FOOLISH THOUGHTS OF YOURS, ALL-
YOU'RE TOO LATE.
IT'S ALREADY TOO LATE.
MARQUISE MORIYAMA WILL NEVER FORGIVE ME.


BUT THE KUZE HOUSE IS SECURE.
KATSURAGI, RINZABURO AMAMIYA REALLY IS AN EXCELLENT MAN.
HE'LL BE A GOOD BUTLER.
WHAT...
...DID YOU DO?


I THREATENED MARQUISE MORIYAMA.
...!
I OUTLINED THE IMPROPRIETY OF HIS OWN PEERAGE.
I MADE HIM PROMISE...
...TO CONFER THE PEERAGE ON YOU AND PROMOTE THE RANK OF THE KUZE HOUSE.

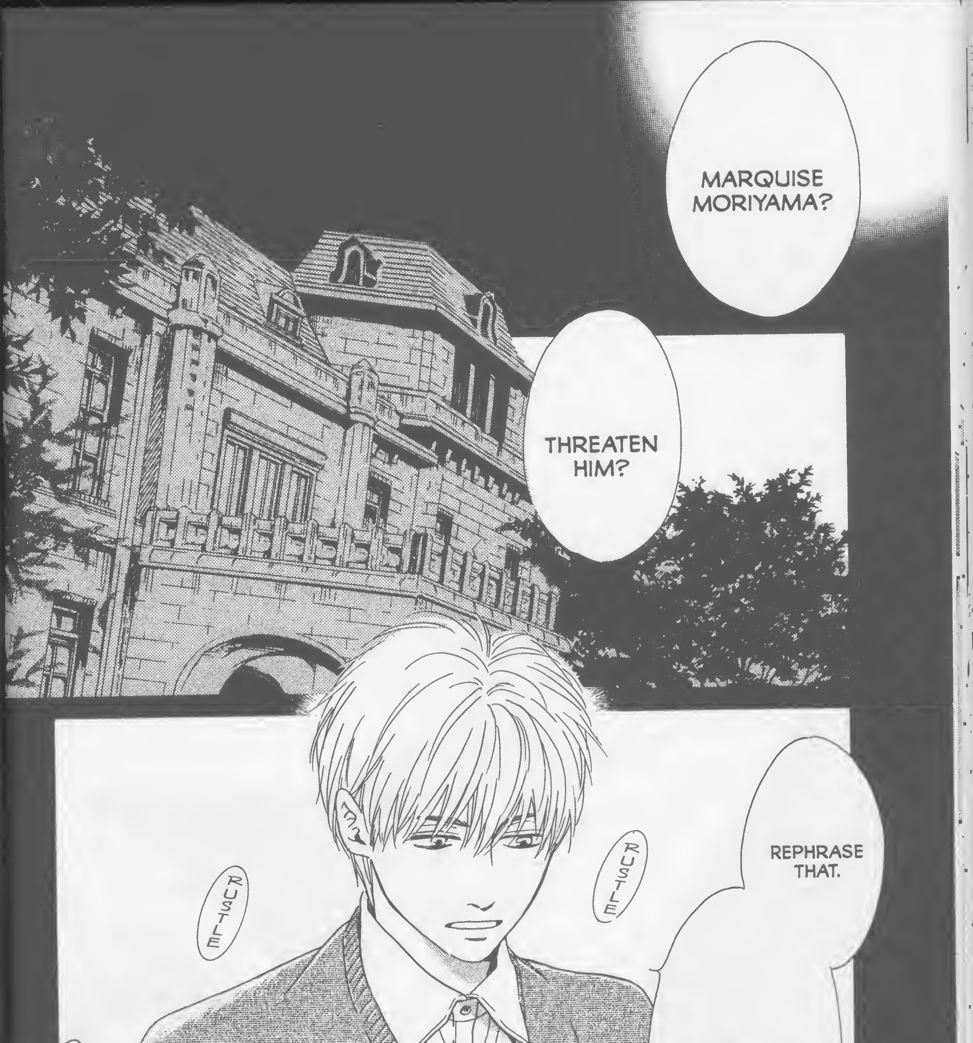

GRAB
!
KLATTER
FLAP
WHACK
KATSURAGI ...
THE KUZE TITLE IS A PERMANENT PEERAGE. THE TITLE IS NOT GIVEN TO A PERSON BUT RATHER TO THE "HOUSE." IF I RESIGN...
...THE NEXT MASTER OF THE HOUSE BECOMES THE VISCOUNT.
I TOLD YOU, DIDN'T I?
I SAID I'D GIVE YOU A TITLE.
MY DEAD FATHER CAN'T DO THAT.
ONLY ME... ALIVE... ONLY I CAN DO THAT.

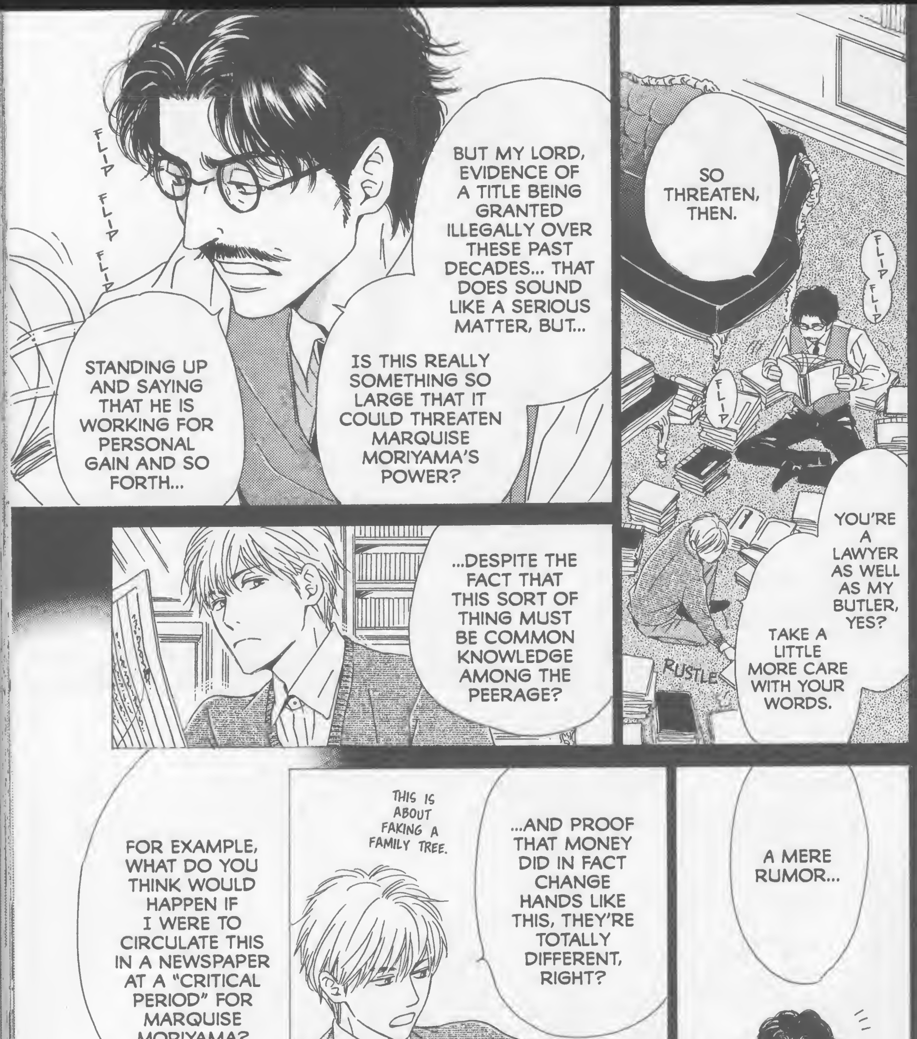

ALL THE THINGS YOU WANTED...
ALL THE THINGS MY FATHER FAILED TO DO...
KATSURAGI...
I TOLD YOU I COULD MAKE THEM HAPPEN.
scene.18 END

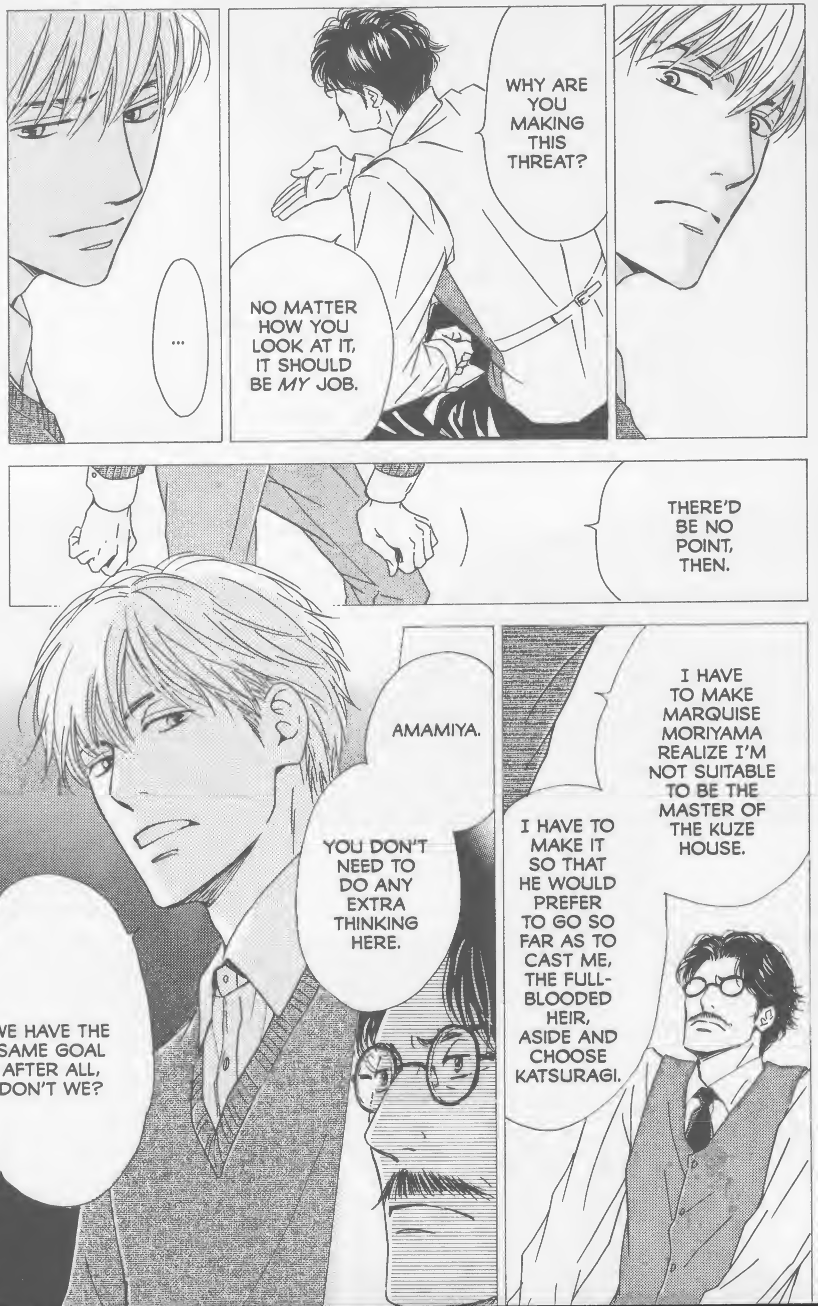
憂鬱な朝
scene 19

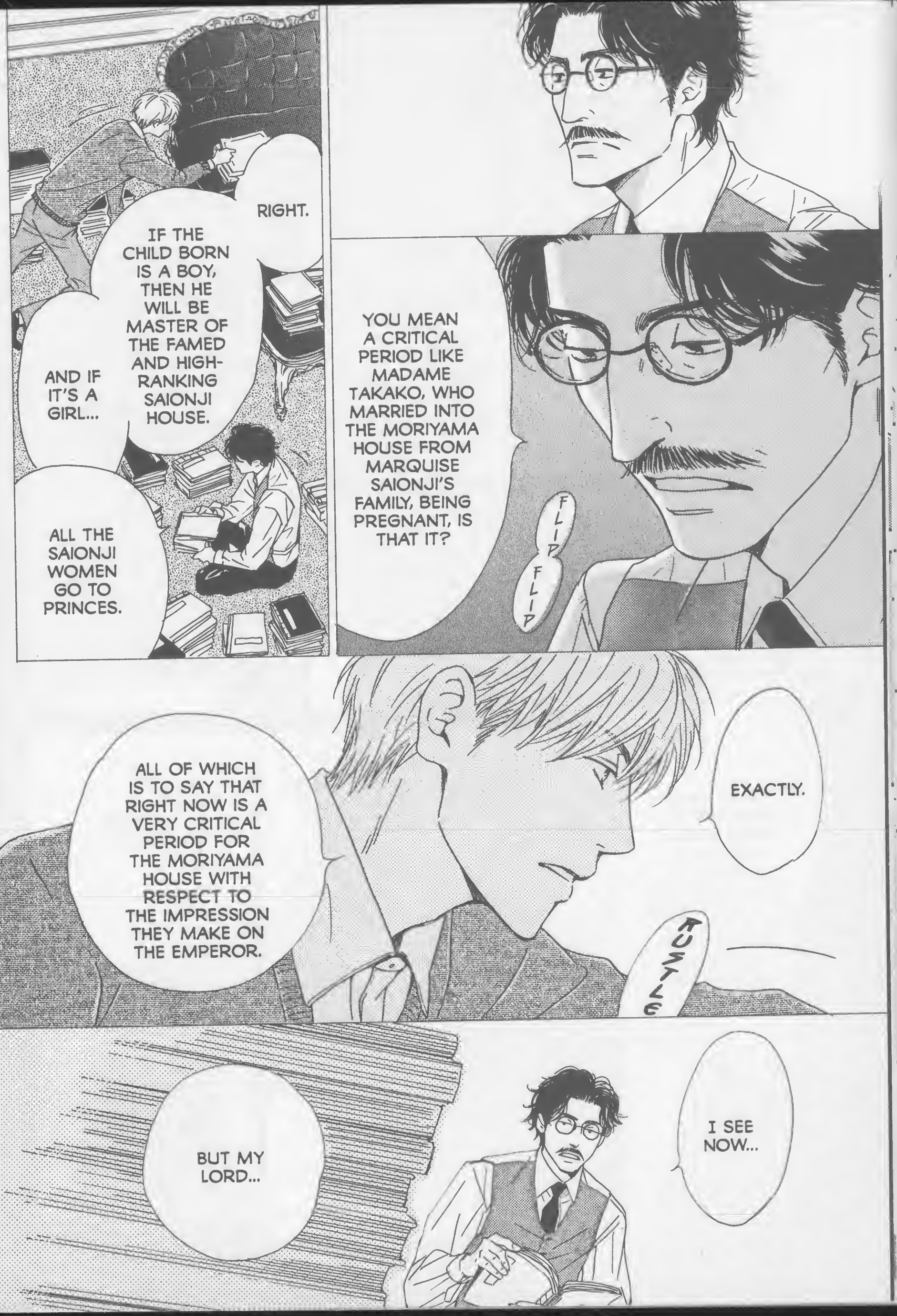
Blue Morning: Scene 19

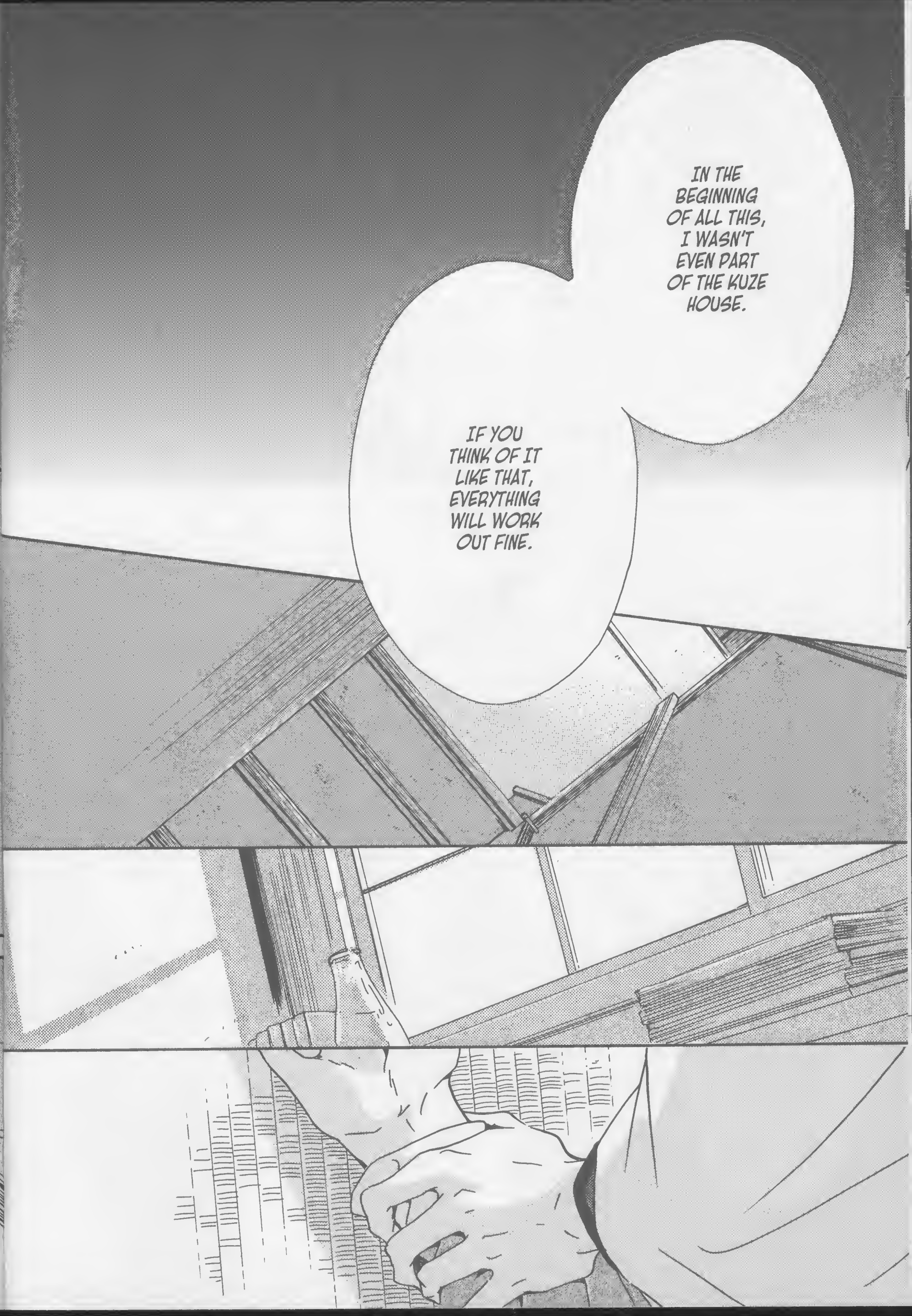
憂鬱な朝

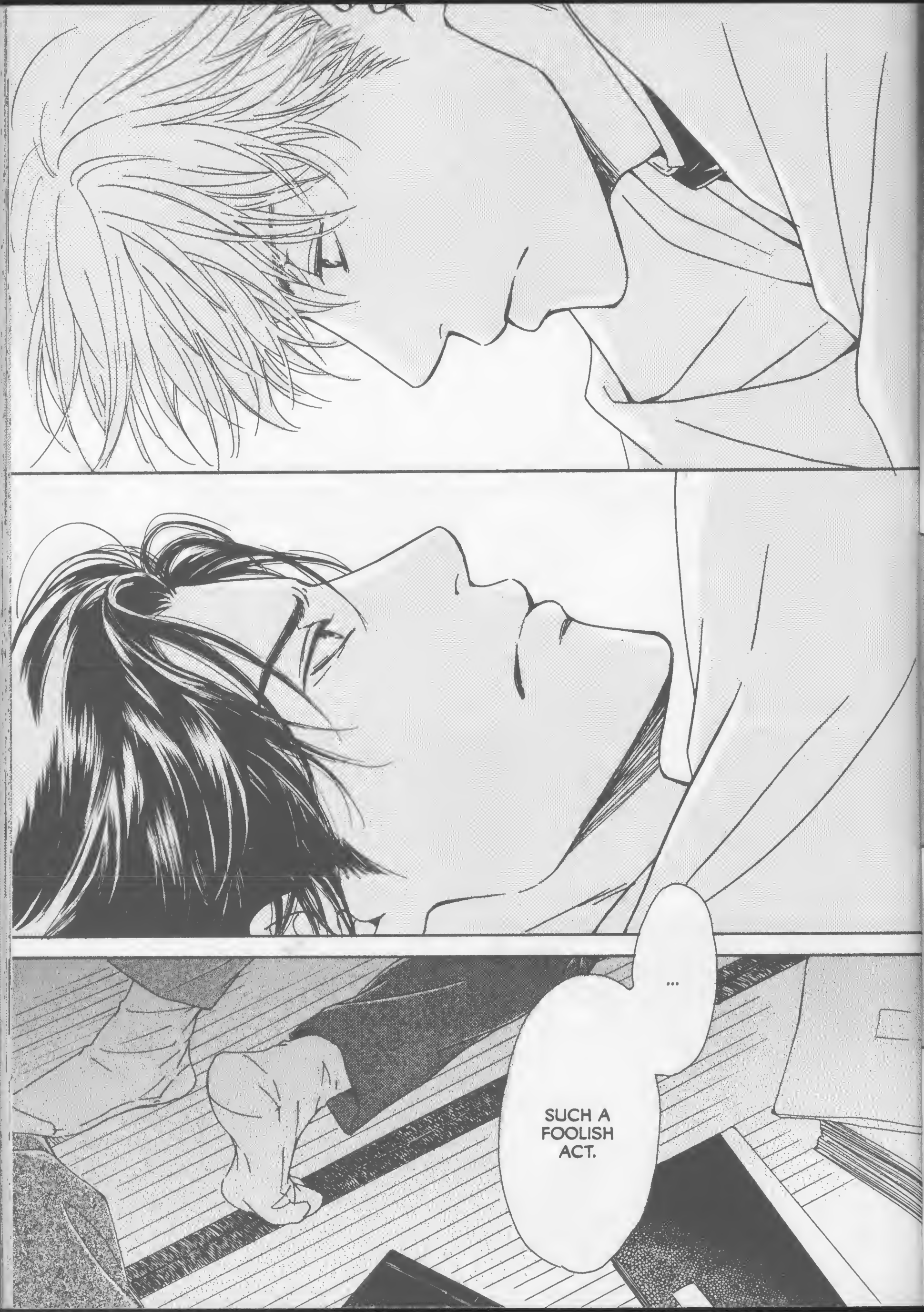

MARQUISE MORIYAMA?
THREATEN HIM?
REPHRASE THAT.
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
I'LL "MAKE A HUMBLE REQUEST."
RUSTLE

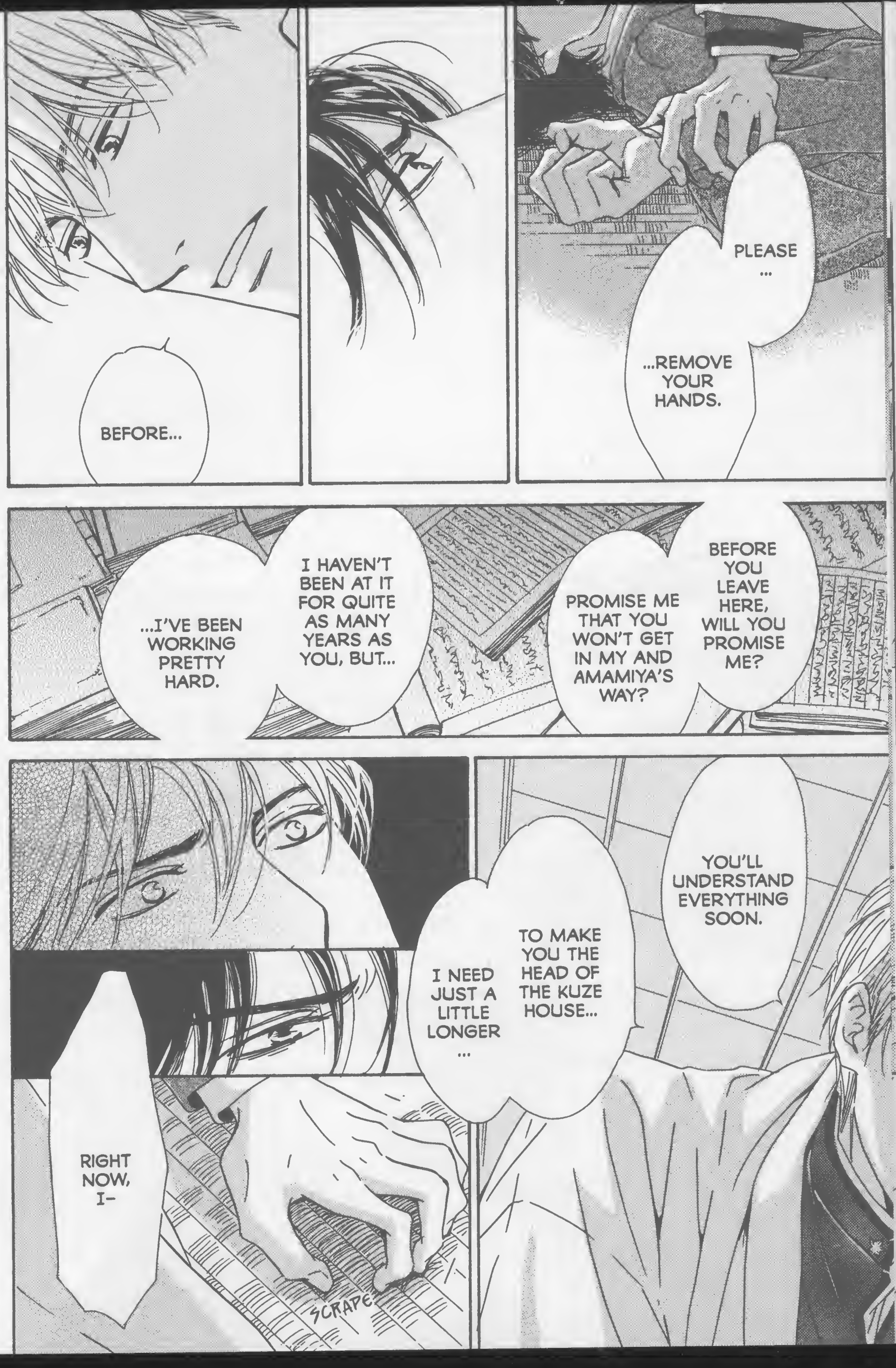

SO THREATEN, THEN.
FLIP FLIP FLIP
FLIP
YOU'RE A LAWYER AS WELL AS MY BUTLER, YES?
TAKE A LITTLE MORE CARE WITH YOUR WORDS.
RUSTLE
BUT MY LORD, EVIDENCE OF A TITLE BEING GRANTED ILLEGALLY OVER THESE PAST DECADES... THAT DOES SOUND LIKE A SERIOUS MATTER, BUT...
FLIP FLIP FLIP FLIP
IS THIS REALLY SOMETHING SO LARGE THAT IT COULD THREATEN MARQUISE MORIYAMA'S POWER?
STANDING UP AND SAYING THAT HE IS WORKING FOR PERSONAL GAIN AND SO FORTH...
...DESPITE THE FACT THAT THIS SORT OF THING MUST BE COMMON KNOWLEDGE AMONG THE PEERAGE?
A MERE RUMOR...
...AND PROOF THAT MONEY DID IN FACT CHANGE HANDS LIKE THIS, THEY'RE TOTALLY DIFFERENT, RIGHT?
THIS IS ABOUT FAKING A FAMILY TREE.
FLAP
FOR EXAMPLE, WHAT DO YOU THINK WOULD HAPPEN IF I WERE TO CIRCULATE THIS IN A NEWSPAPER AT A "CRITICAL PERIOD" FOR MARQUISE MORIYAMA?

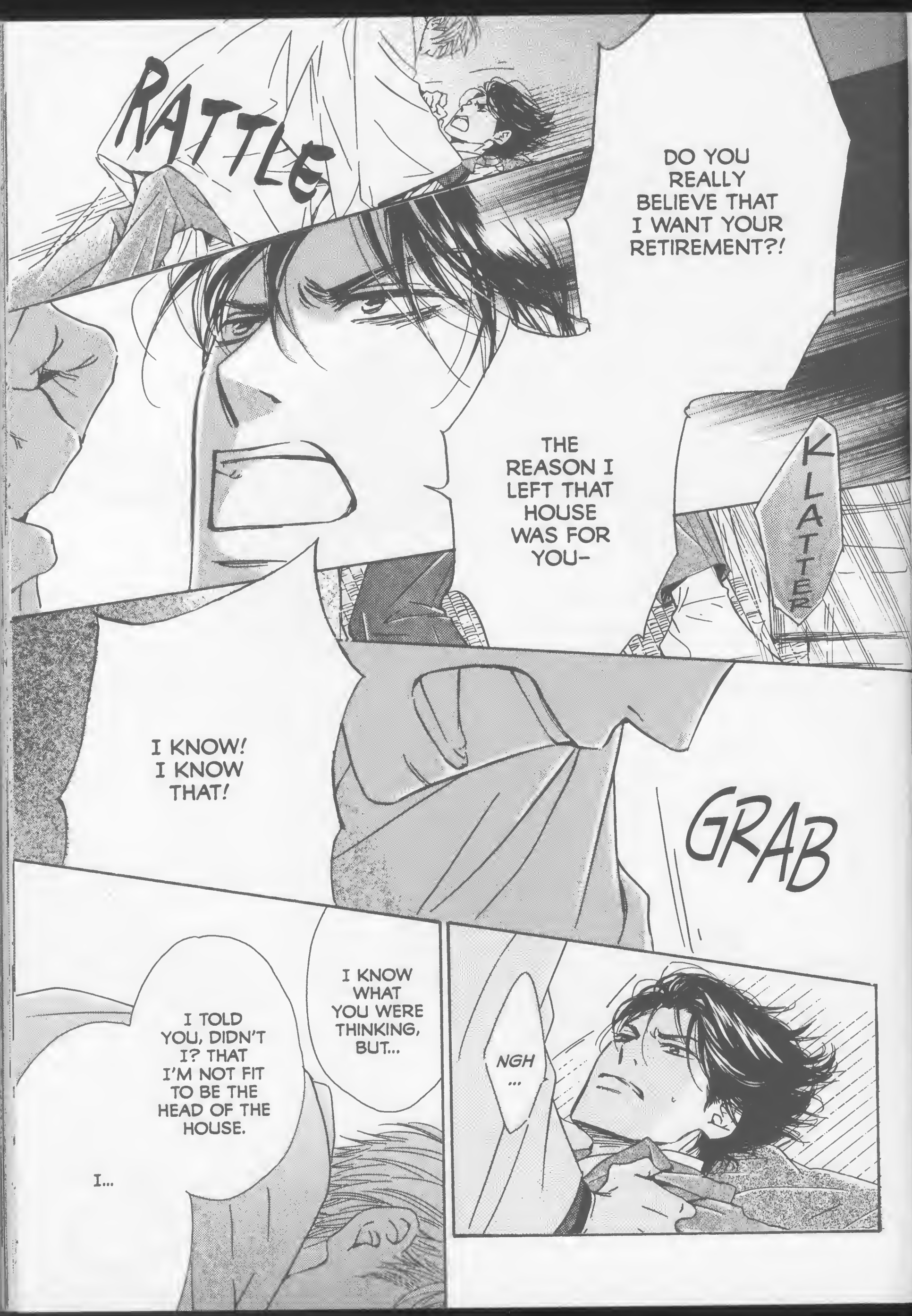

...
WHY ARE YOU MAKING THIS THREAT?
NO MATTER HOW YOU LOOK AT IT, IT SHOULD BE *MY* JOB.
THERE'D BE NO POINT, THEN.
I HAVE TO MAKE MARQUISE MORIYAMA REALIZE I'M NOT SUITABLE TO BE THE MASTER OF THE KUZE HOUSE.
I HAVE TO MAKE IT SO THAT HE WOULD PREFER TO GO SO FAR AS TO CAST ME, THE FULL-BLOODED HEIR, ASIDE AND CHOOSE KATSURAGI.
AMAMIYA.
YOU DON'T NEED TO DO ANY EXTRA THINKING HERE.
WE HAVE THE SAME GOAL AFTER ALL, DON'T WE?

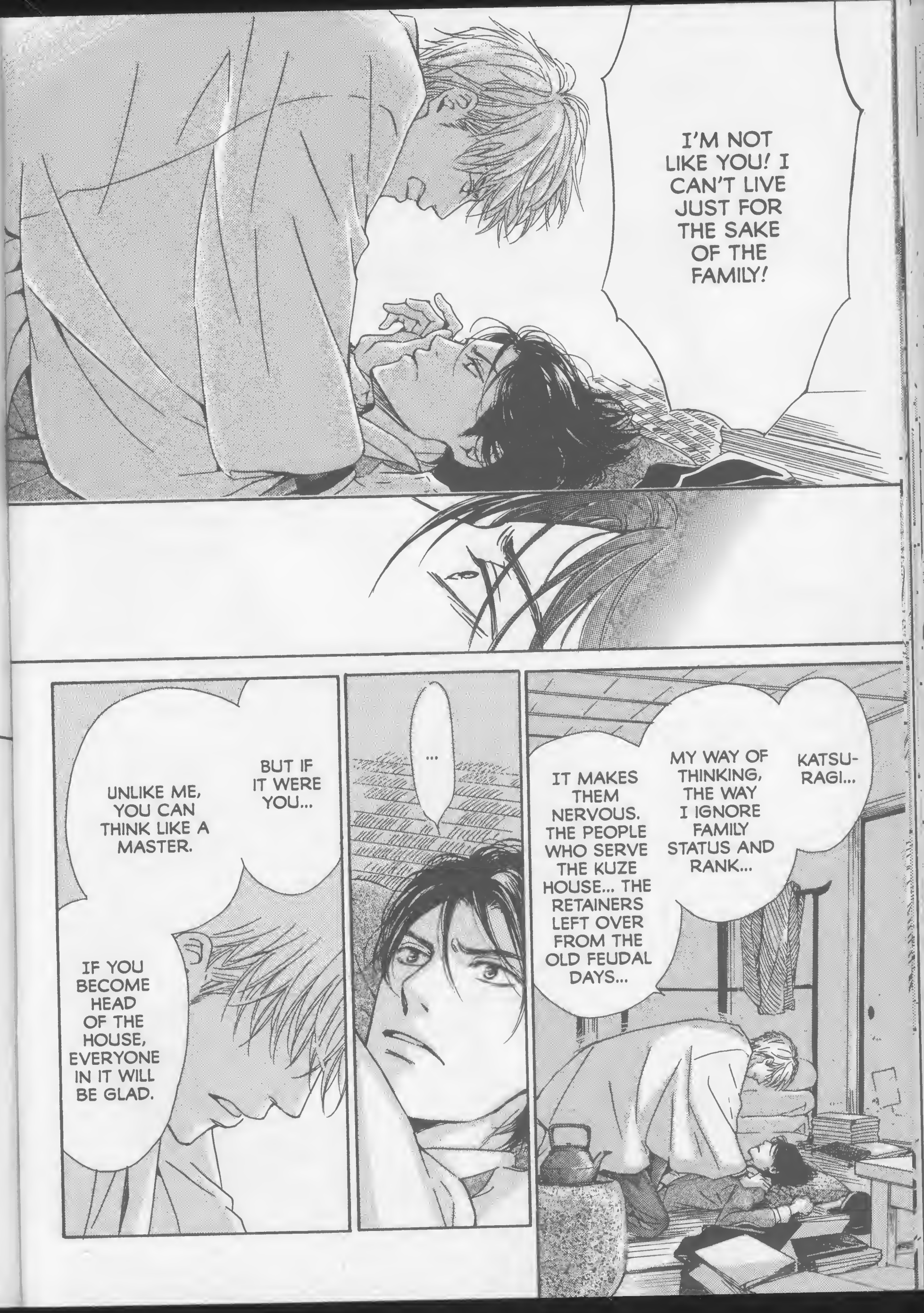

RIGHT.
IF THE CHILD BORN IS A BOY, THEN HE WILL BE MASTER OF THE FAMED AND HIGH-RANKING SAIONJI HOUSE.
AND IF IT'S A GIRL...
ALL THE SAIONJI WOMEN GO TO PRINCES.
YOU MEAN A CRITICAL PERIOD LIKE MADAME TAKAKO, WHO MARRIED INTO THE MORIYAMA HOUSE FROM MARQUISE SAIONJI'S FAMILY, BEING PREGNANT, IS THAT IT?
FLIP FLIP
ALL OF WHICH IS TO SAY THAT RIGHT NOW IS A VERY CRITICAL PERIOD FOR THE MORIYAMA HOUSE WITH RESPECT TO THE IMPRESSION THEY MAKE ON THE EMPEROR.
EXACTLY.
RUSTLE
I SEE NOW...
BUT MY LORD...

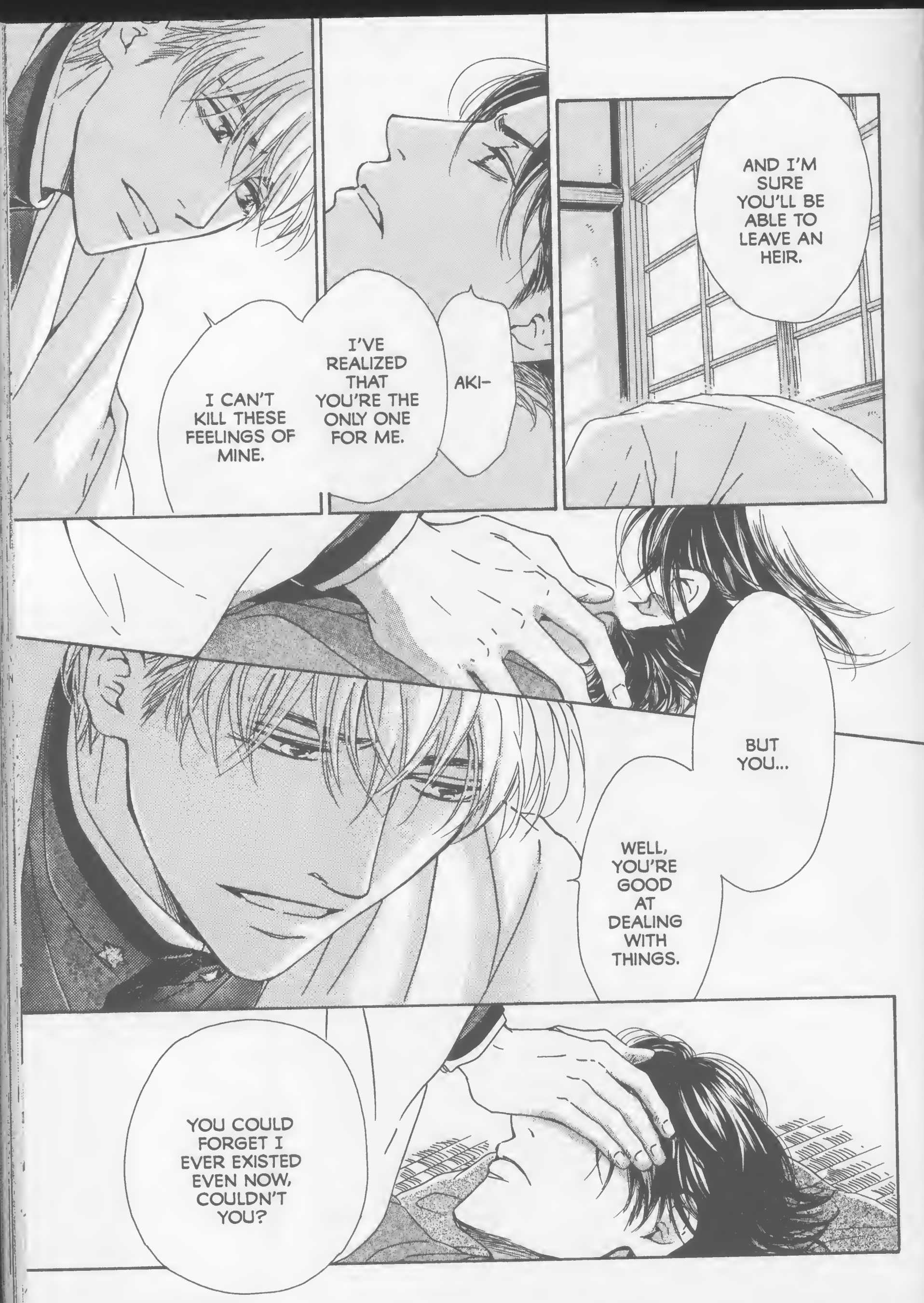

IN THE BEGINNING OF ALL THIS, I WASN'T EVEN PART OF THE KUZE HOUSE.
IF YOU THINK OF IT LIKE THAT, EVERYTHING WILL WORK OUT FINE.
...

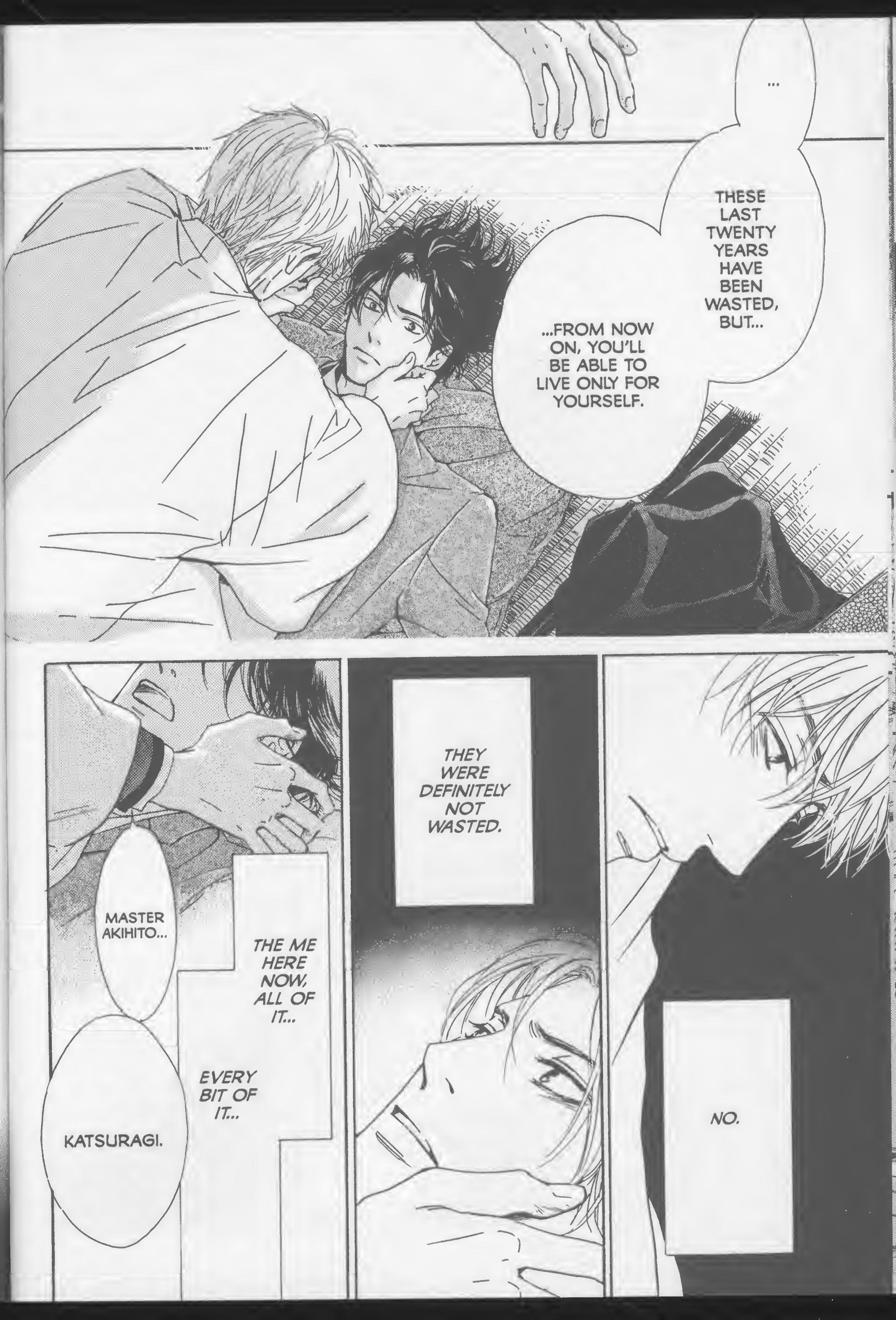

...
SUCH A FOOLISH ACT.

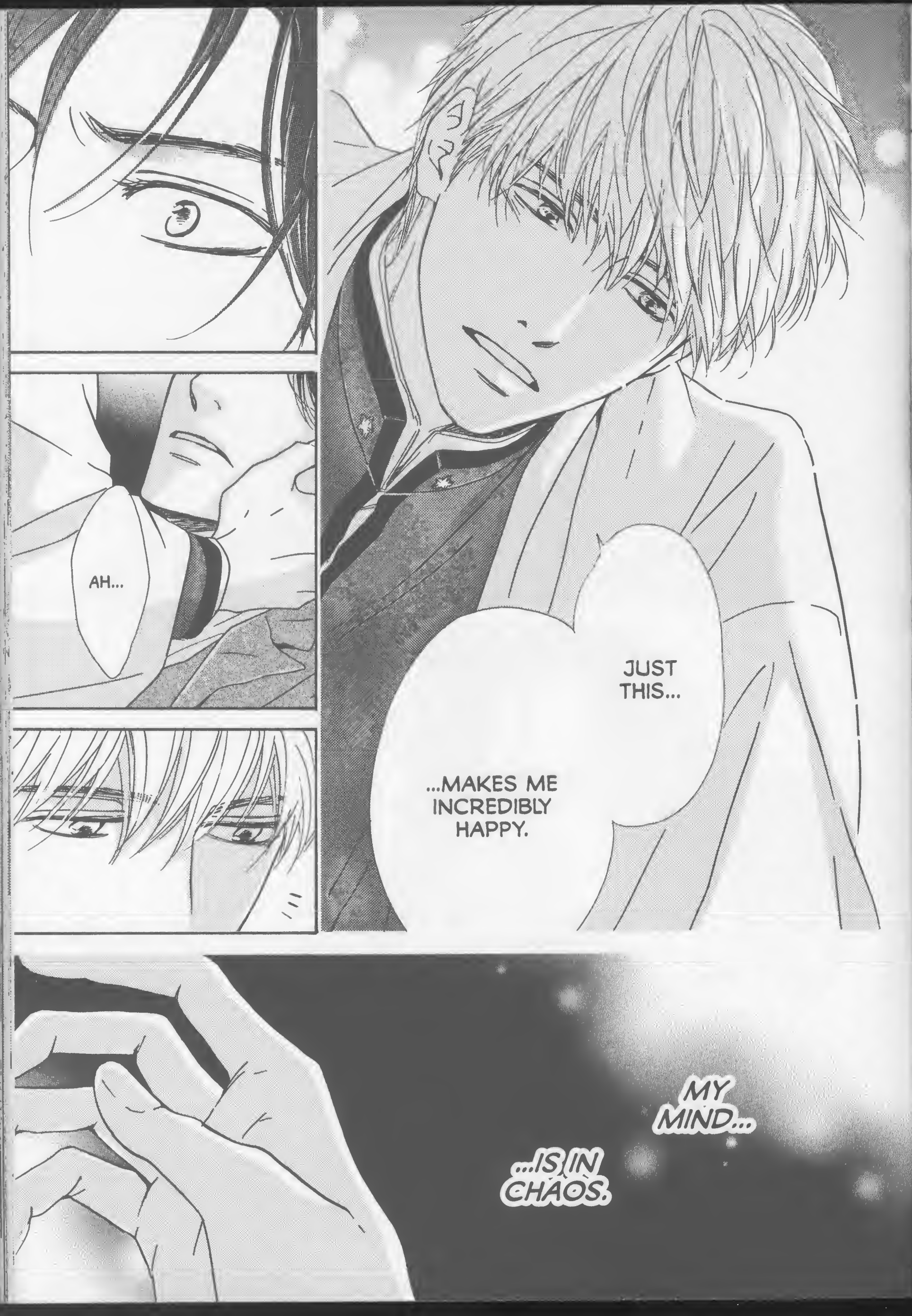

PLEASE
...
...REMOVE YOUR HANDS.
BEFORE...
BEFORE YOU LEAVE HERE, WILL YOU PROMISE ME?
PROMISE ME THAT YOU WON'T GET IN MY AND AMAMIYA'S WAY?
I HAVEN'T BEEN AT IT FOR QUITE AS MANY YEARS AS YOU, BUT...
...I'VE BEEN WORKING PRETTY HARD.
YOU'LL UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING SOON.
TO MAKE YOU THE HEAD OF THE KUZE HOUSE...
I NEED JUST A LITTLE LONGER
...
RIGHT NOW, I–
SCRAPE

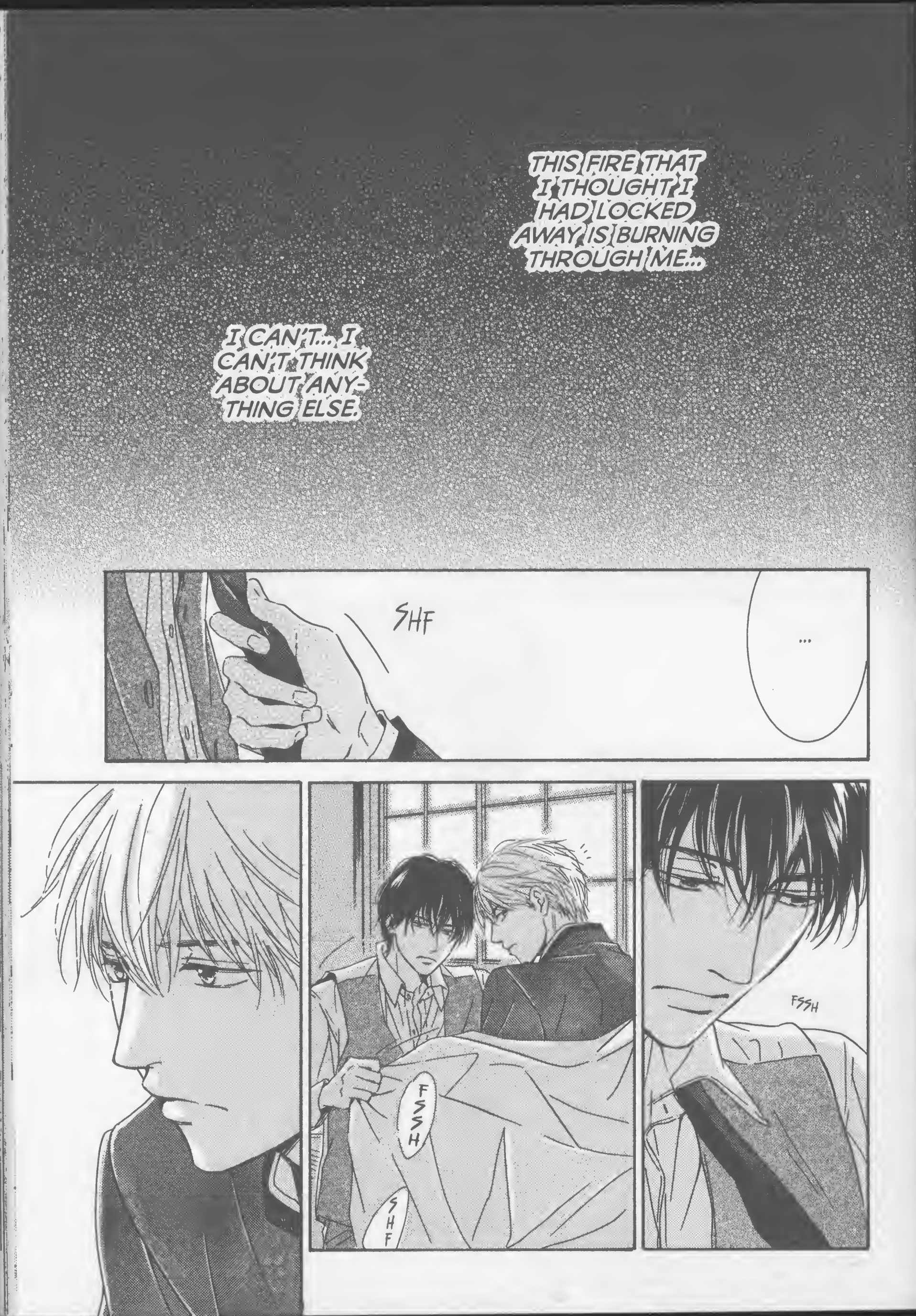

RATTLE
DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE THAT I WANT YOUR RETIREMENT?!
THE REASON I LEFT THAT HOUSE WAS FOR YOU–
KLATTER
GRAB
I KNOW! I KNOW THAT!
NGH
...
I KNOW WHAT YOU WERE THINKING, BUT...
I TOLD YOU, DIDN'T I? THAT I'M NOT FIT TO BE THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE.
I...

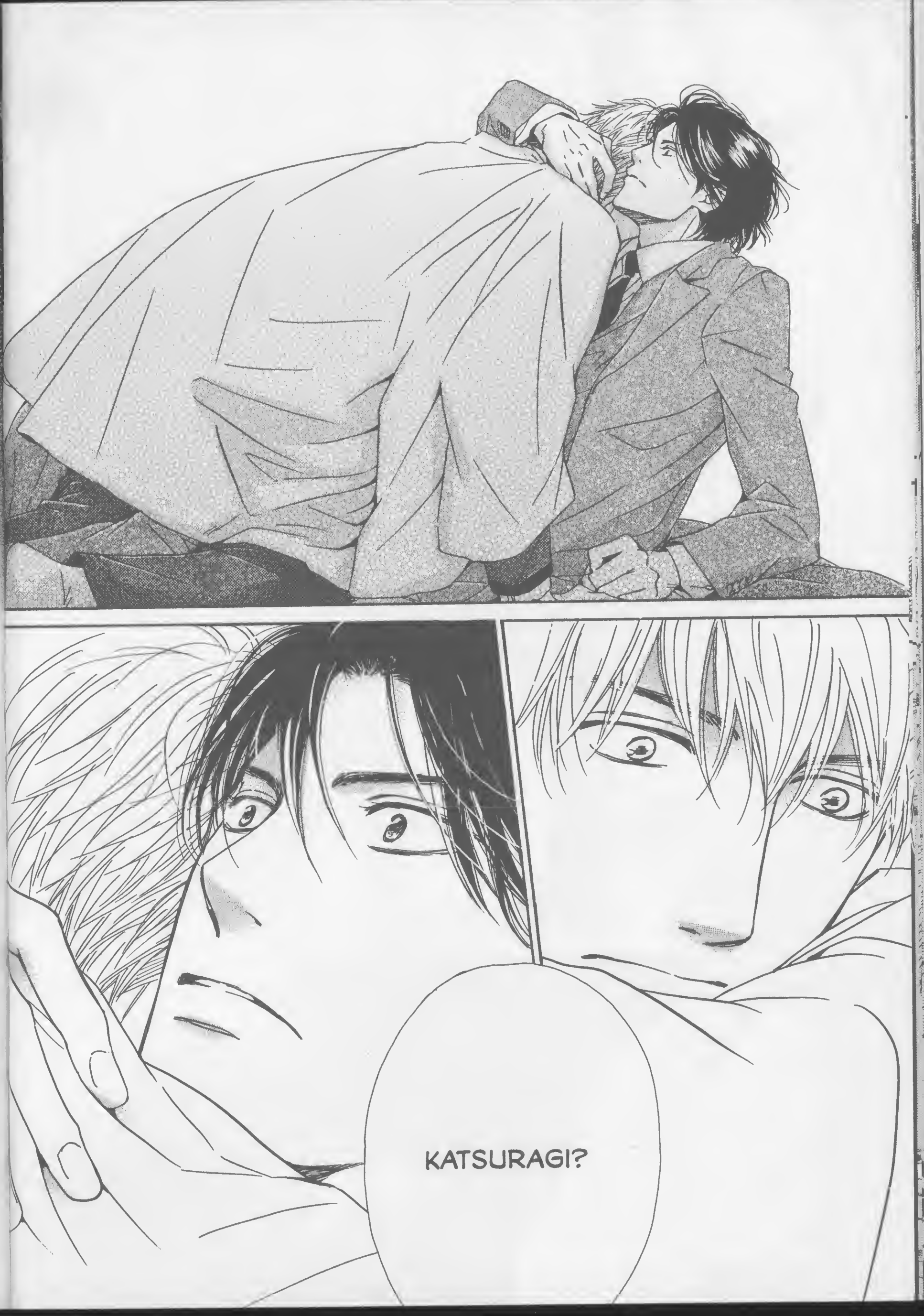

I'M NOT LIKE YOU! I CAN'T LIVE JUST FOR THE SAKE OF THE FAMILY!
KATSU-RAGI...
MY WAY OF THINKING, THE WAY I IGNORE FAMILY STATUS AND RANK...
IT MAKES THEM NERVOUS. THE PEOPLE WHO SERVE THE KUZE HOUSE... THE RETAINERS LEFT OVER FROM THE OLD FEUDAL DAYS...
...
BUT IF IT WERE YOU...
UNLIKE ME, YOU CAN THINK LIKE A MASTER.
IF YOU BECOME HEAD OF THE HOUSE, EVERYONE IN IT WILL BE GLAD.

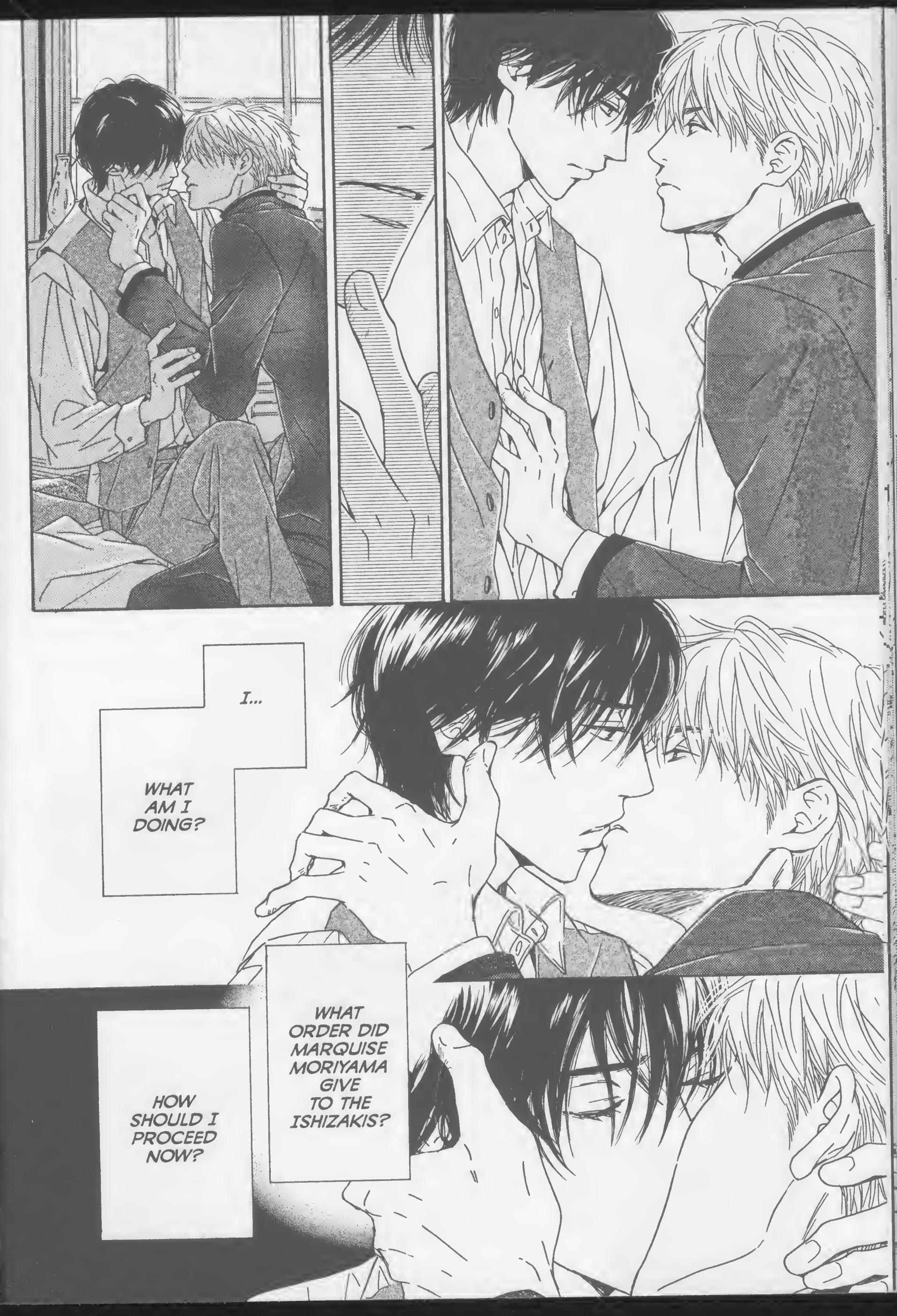

AND I'M SURE YOU'LL BE ABLE TO LEAVE AN HEIR.
AKI-
I'VE REALIZED THAT YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE FOR ME.
I CAN'T KILL THESE FEELINGS OF MINE.
BUT YOU...
WELL, YOU'RE GOOD AT DEALING WITH THINGS.
YOU COULD FORGET I EVER EXISTED EVEN NOW, COULDN'T YOU?

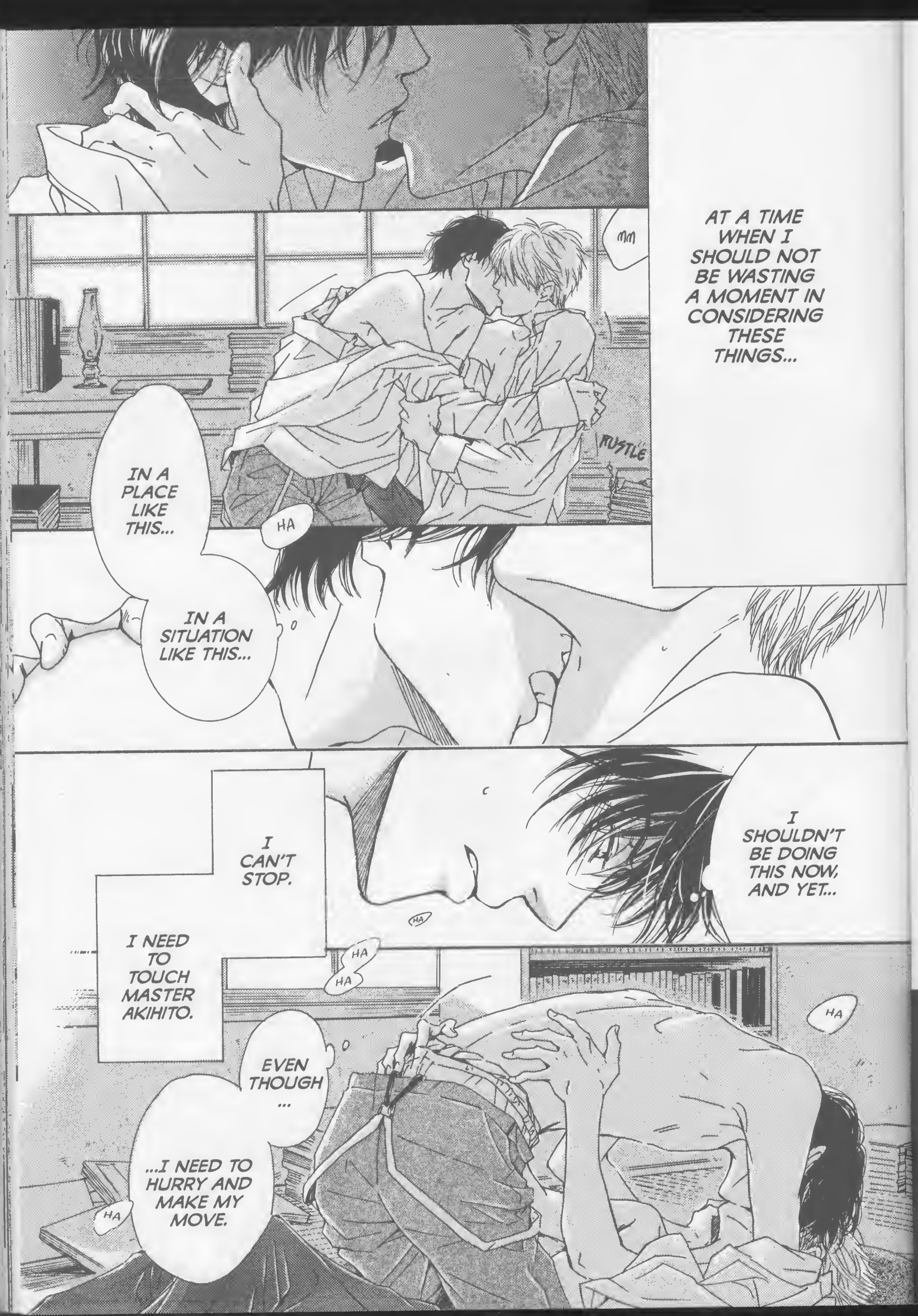

...
THESE LAST TWENTY YEARS HAVE BEEN WASTED, BUT...
...FROM NOW ON, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO LIVE ONLY FOR YOURSELF.
NO.
THEY WERE DEFINITELY NOT WASTED.
THE ME HERE NOW, ALL OF IT...
EVERY BIT OF IT...
MASTER AKIHITO...
KATSURAGI.


JUST THIS...
...MAKES ME INCREDIBLY HAPPY.
AH...
MY MIND...
...IS IN CHAOS.


THIS FIRE THAT I THOUGHT I HAD LOCKED AWAY IS BURNING THROUGH ME...
I CAN'T... I CAN'T THINK ABOUT ANYTHING ELSE.
...
SHF
FSSH
FSSH
SHF

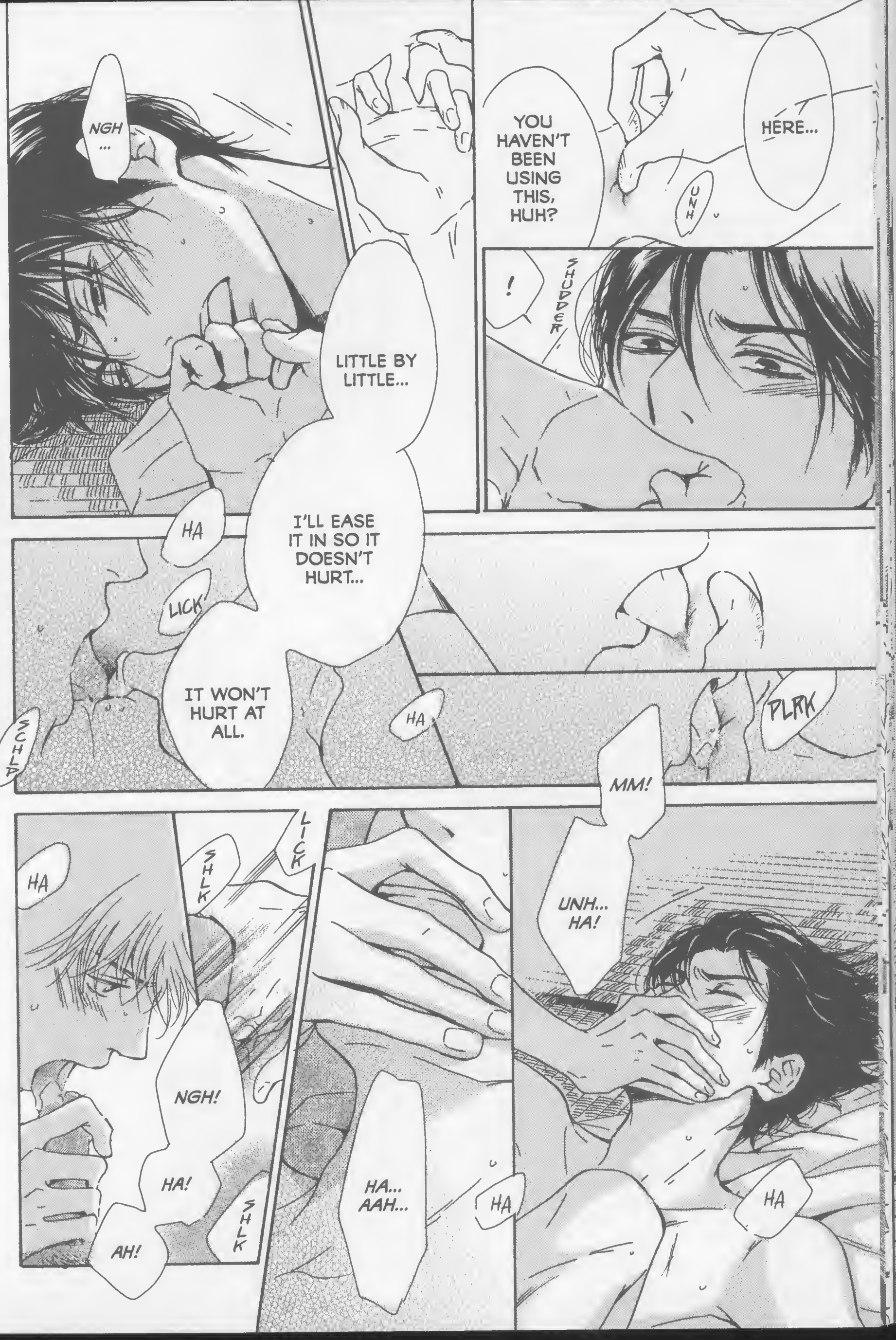

KATSURAGI?

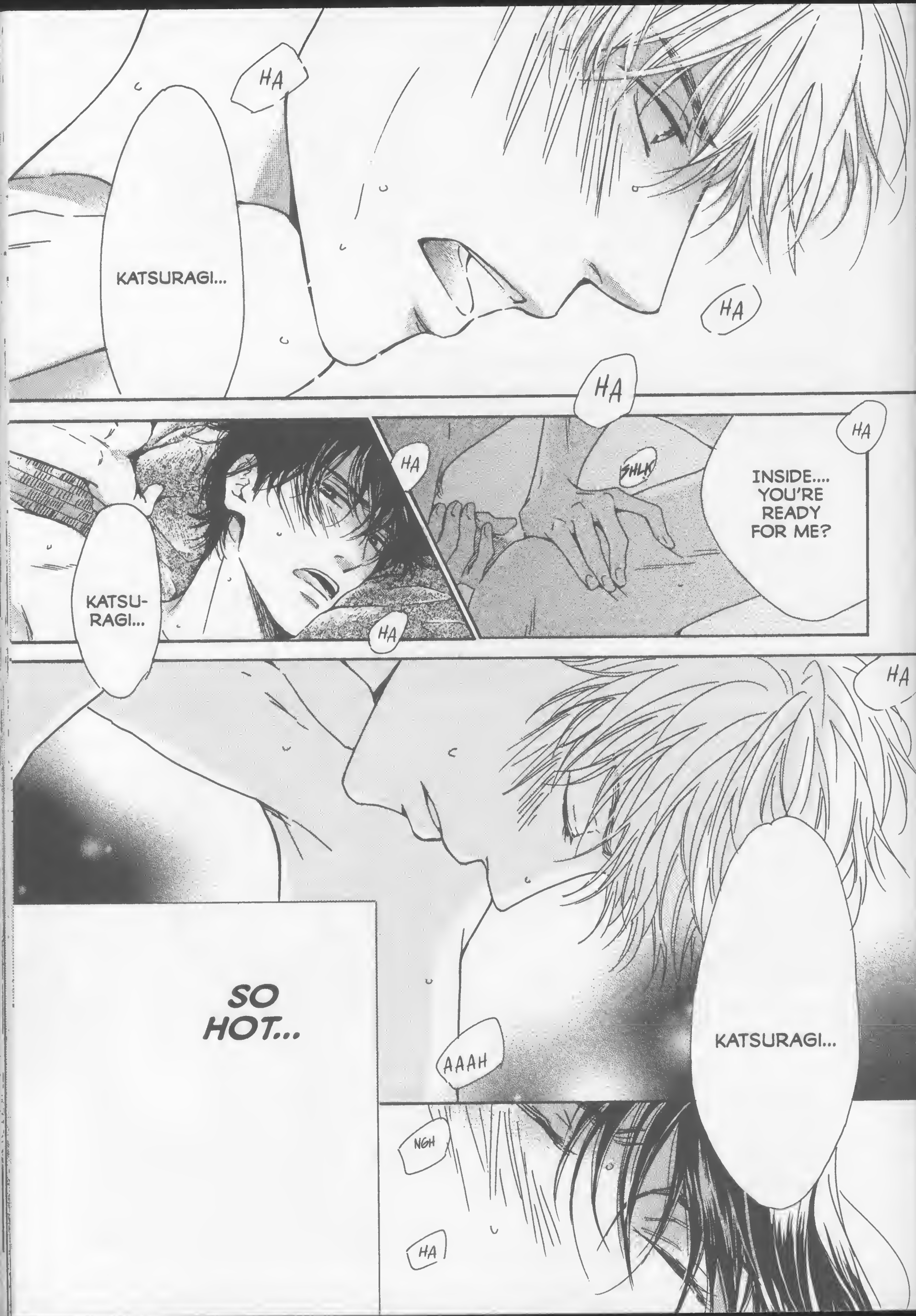

I...
WHAT AM I DOING?
WHAT ORDER DID MARQUISE MORIYAMA GIVE TO THE ISHIZAKIS?
HOW SHOULD I PROCEED NOW?

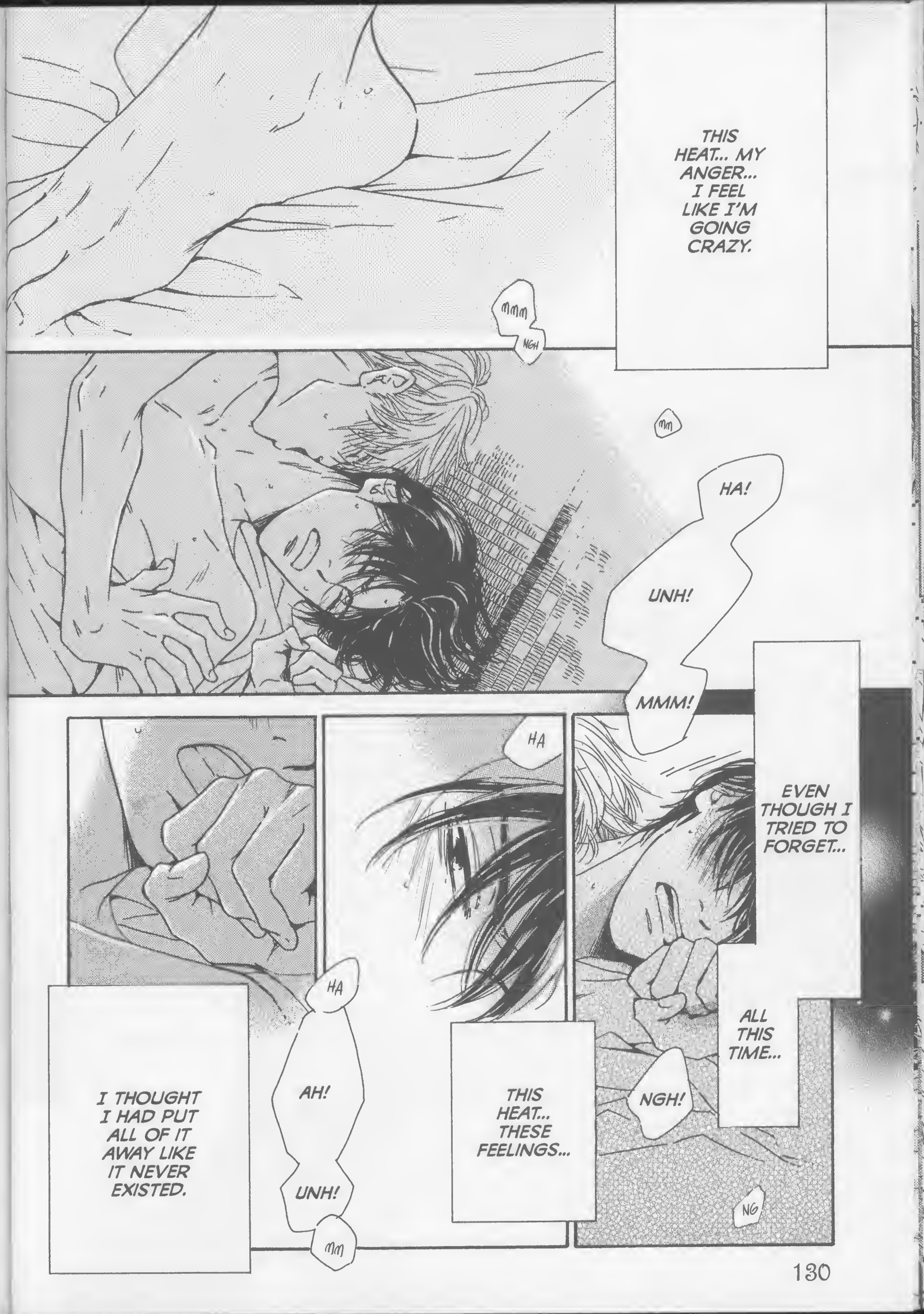

AT A TIME WHEN I SHOULD NOT BE WASTING A MOMENT IN CONSIDERING THESE THINGS...
MM
RUSTLE
IN A PLACE LIKE THIS...
HA
IN A SITUATION LIKE THIS...
I SHOULDN'T BE DOING THIS NOW, AND YET...
I CAN'T STOP.
HA
I NEED TO TOUCH MASTER AKIHITO.
HA
HA
HA
EVEN THOUGH...
...I NEED TO HURRY AND MAKE MY MOVE.
HA

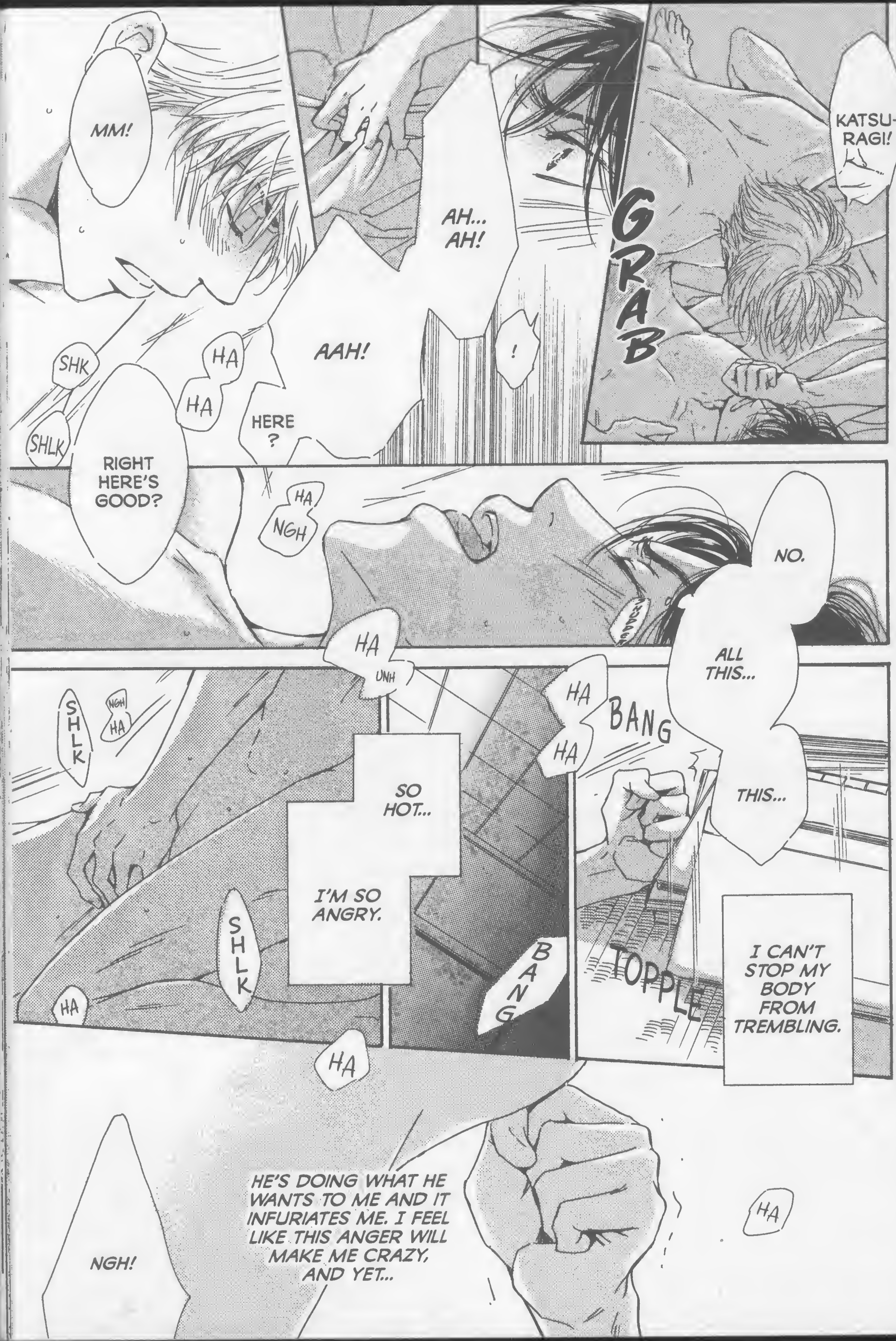
SSP
MASTER AKIHITO.
HA
UNH!
KATSU-RAGI.
KATSURAGI...
MASTER AKIHITO.
AH
NGH!
FLIK
...
PINCH
UNNH!
HA
HA
SQUEEZE
NGH
HA
NGH
LICK
MM!
SUCK
KISS
SHLP

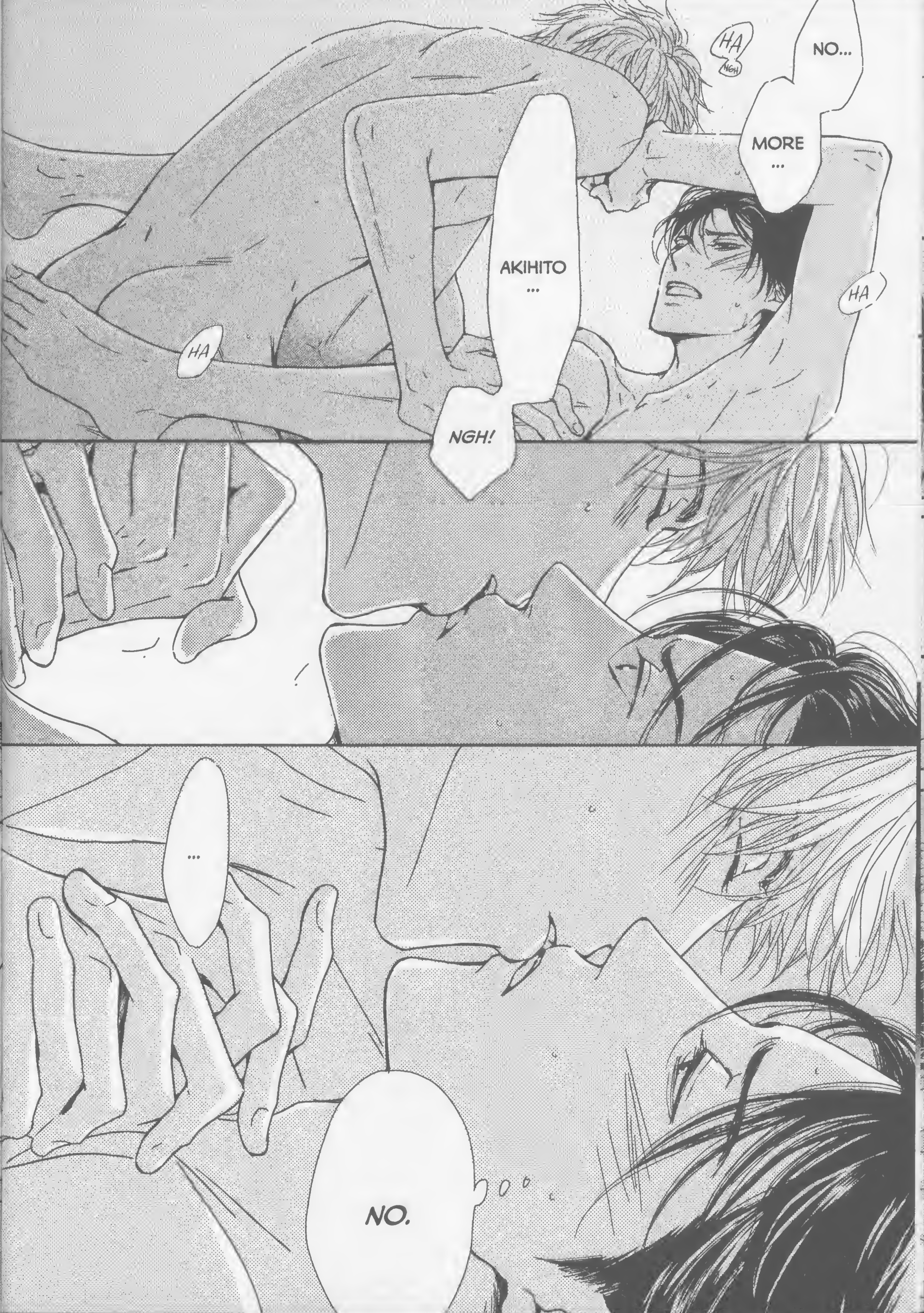
MASTER AKIHITO...
AH!
AH...
AAAH!
RTL
FLAP FLAP
WHEE
HA
HA
HA
SHLK
UNH... AH...
SHRK
HA
NGH
HA

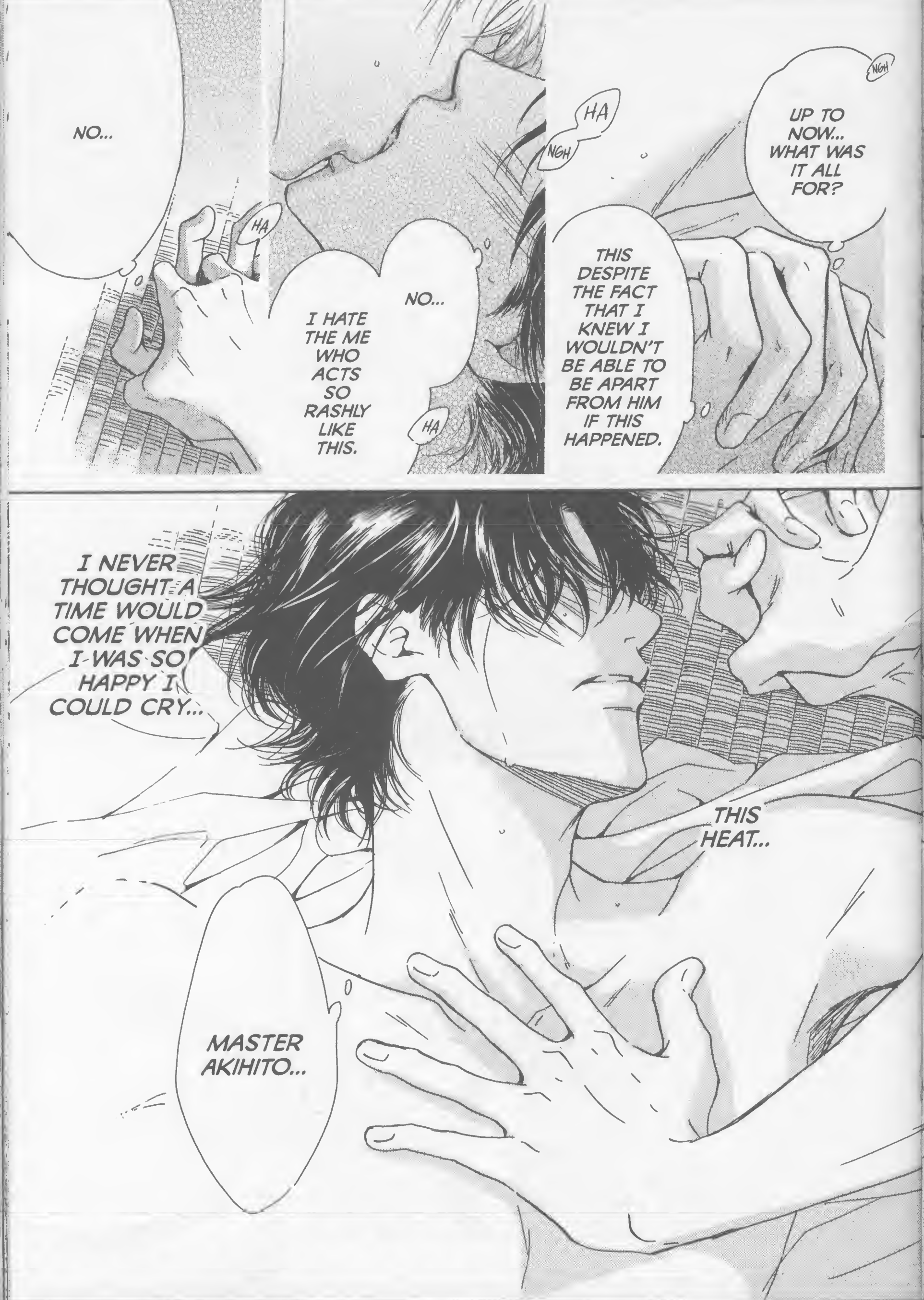

HERE...
UNH
YOU HAVEN'T BEEN USING THIS, HUH?
SHUDDER
!
NGH...
LITTLE BY LITTLE...
PLRK
HA
I'LL EASE IT IN SO IT DOESN'T HURT...
HA
LICK
SCHLP
IT WON'T HURT AT ALL.
MM!
UNH... HA!
HA
HA
HA... AAH...
LICK
SHLK
HA
NGH!
HA!
AH!
SHLK

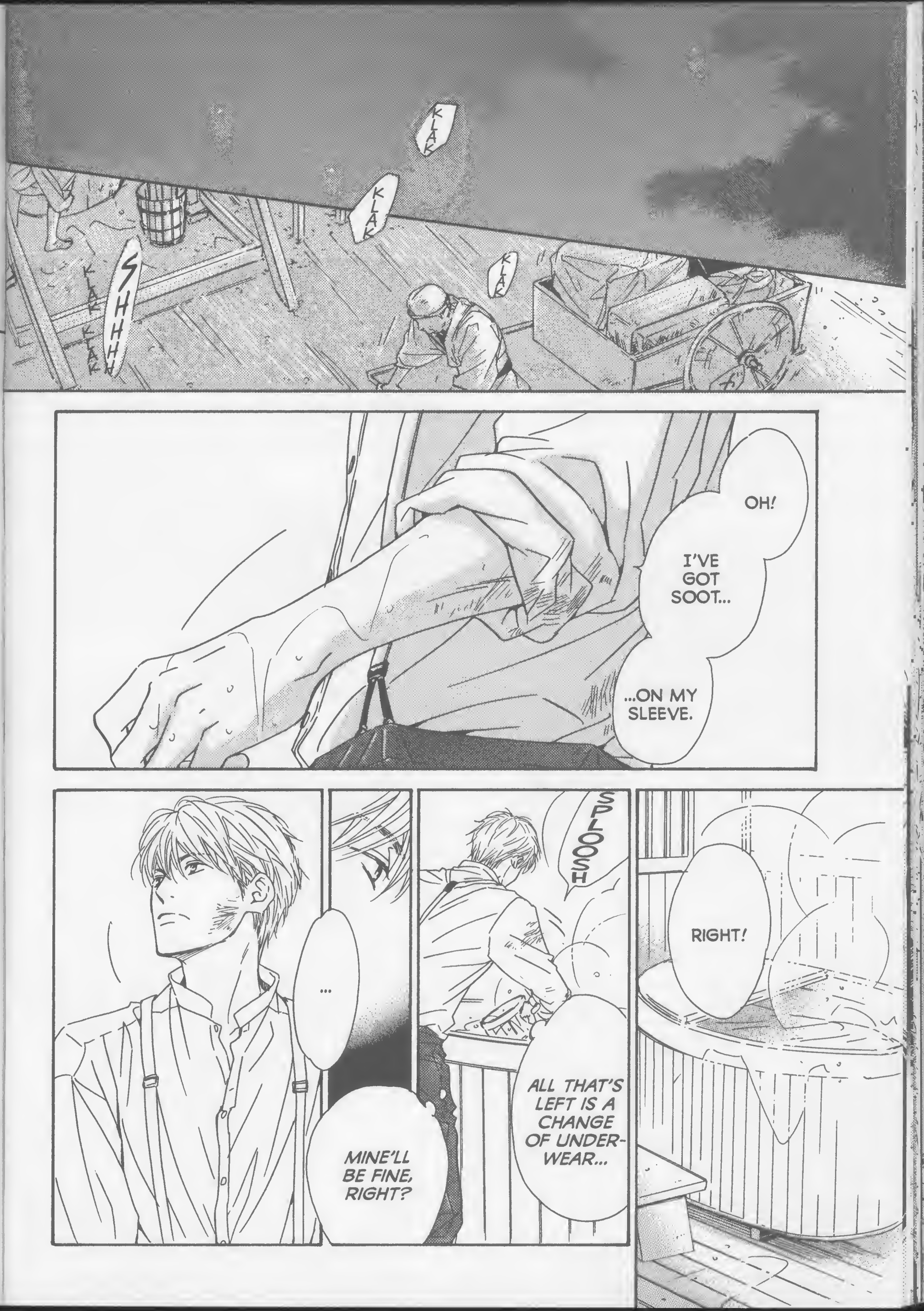

HA
KATSURAGI...
HA
HA
HA
INSIDE.... YOU'RE READY FOR ME?
SHLK
HA
KATSU-RAGI...
HA
HA
KATSURAGI...
AAAH
SO HOT...
NGH
HA

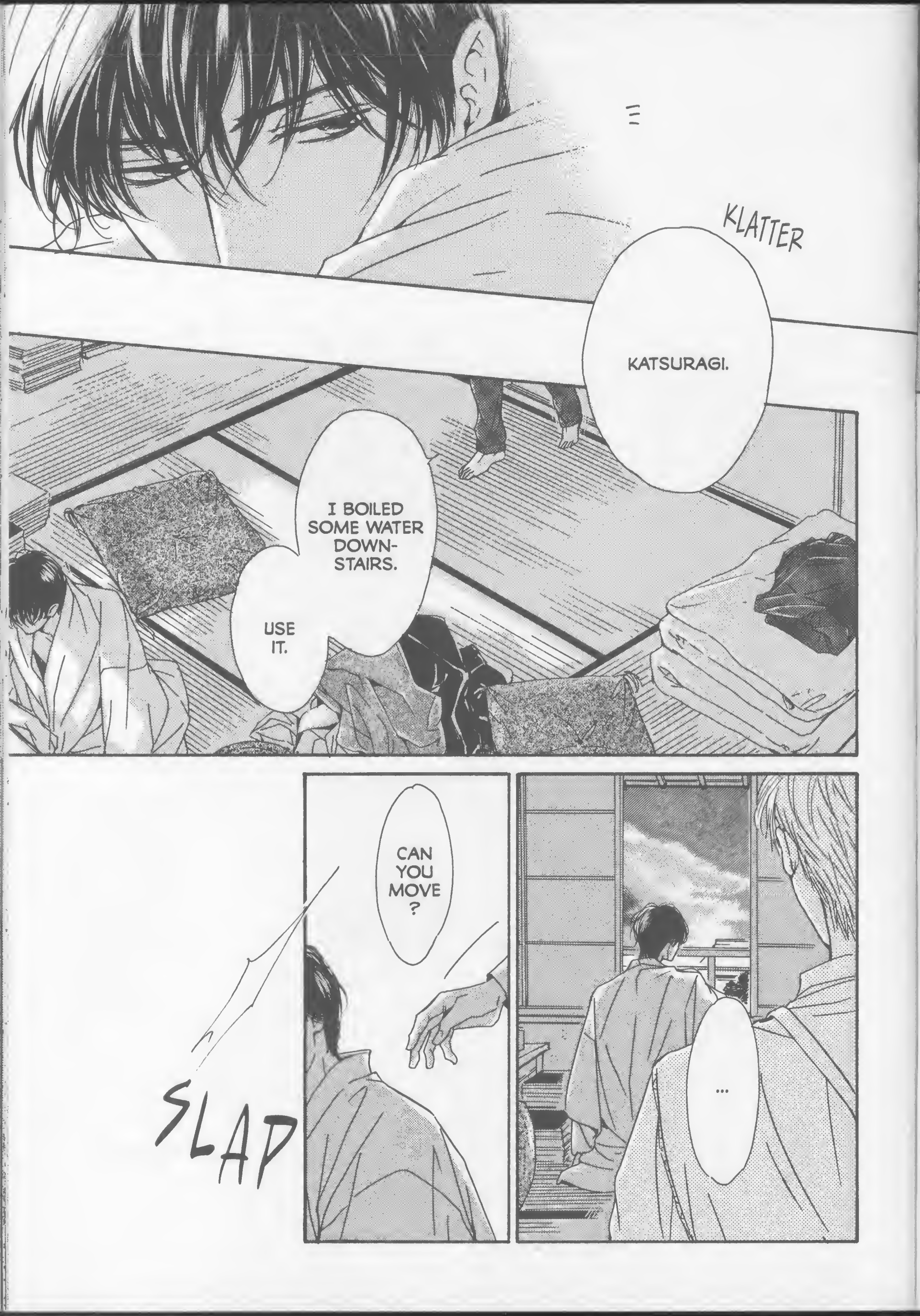

THIS HEAT... MY ANGER... I FEEL LIKE I'M GOING CRAZY.
MMM
NGH
mm
HA!
UNH!
MMM!
EVEN THOUGH I TRIED TO FORGET...
ALL THIS TIME...
NGH!
NG
HA
THIS HEAT... THESE FEELINGS...
HA
AH!
UNH!
mm
I THOUGHT I HAD PUT ALL OF IT AWAY LIKE IT NEVER EXISTED.

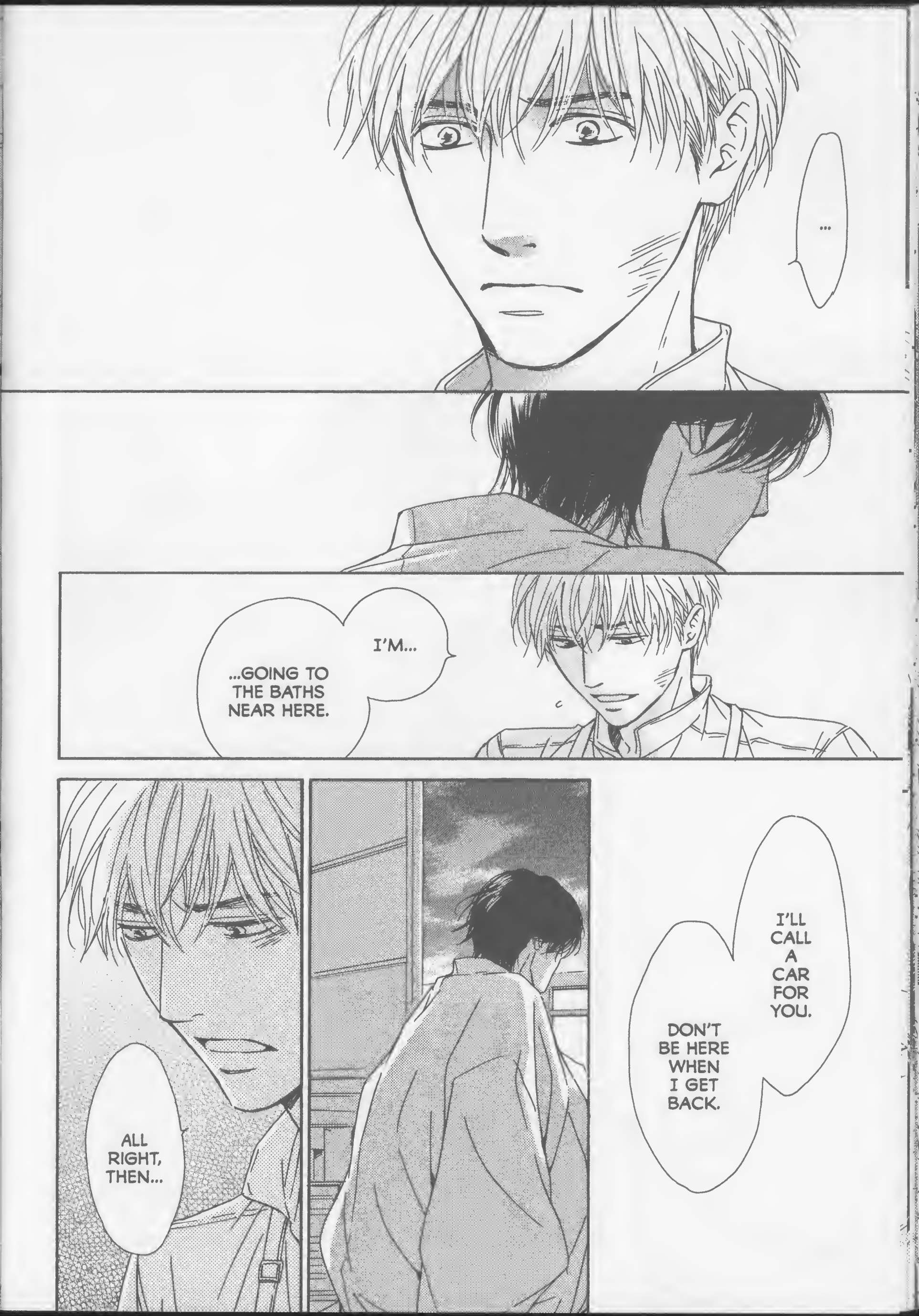

KATSU-RAGI!
GRAB
!
AH... AH!
AAH!
MM!
HA
HA
HERE?
SHK
SHLK
RIGHT HERE'S GOOD?
NO.
HA
NGH
ALL THIS...
THIS...
HA
HA
BANG
HA
UNH
TOPPLE
I CAN'T STOP MY BODY FROM TREMBLING.
BANG
SO HOT...
I'M SO ANGRY.
SHLK
NGH
HA
SHLK
HA
HA
HA
HE'S DOING WHAT HE WANTS TO ME AND IT INFURIATES ME. I FEEL LIKE THIS ANGER WILL MAKE ME CRAZY, AND YET...
NGH!

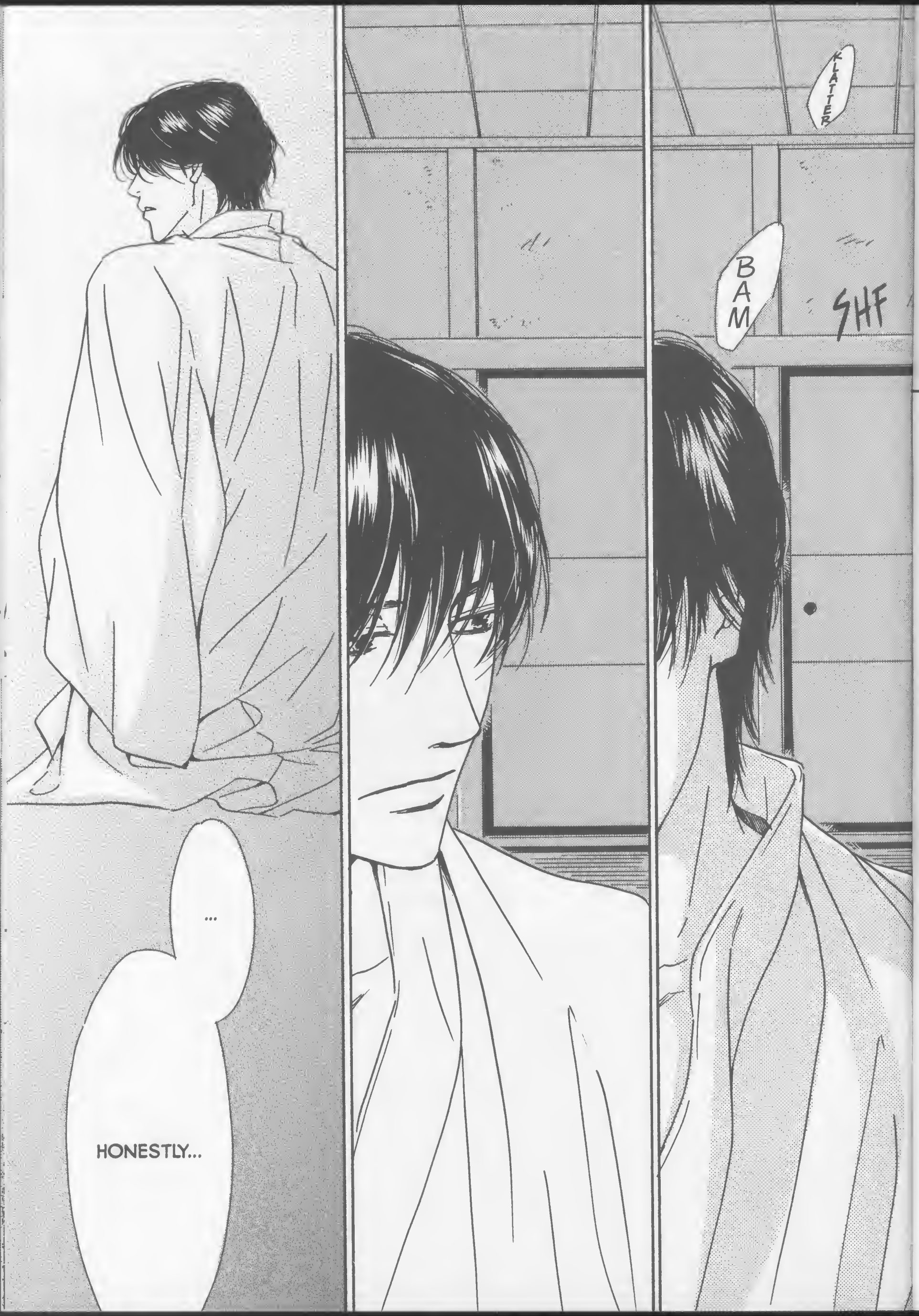

HA NGH
NO...
MORE ...
AKIHITO ...
HA
HA
NGH!
...
NO.

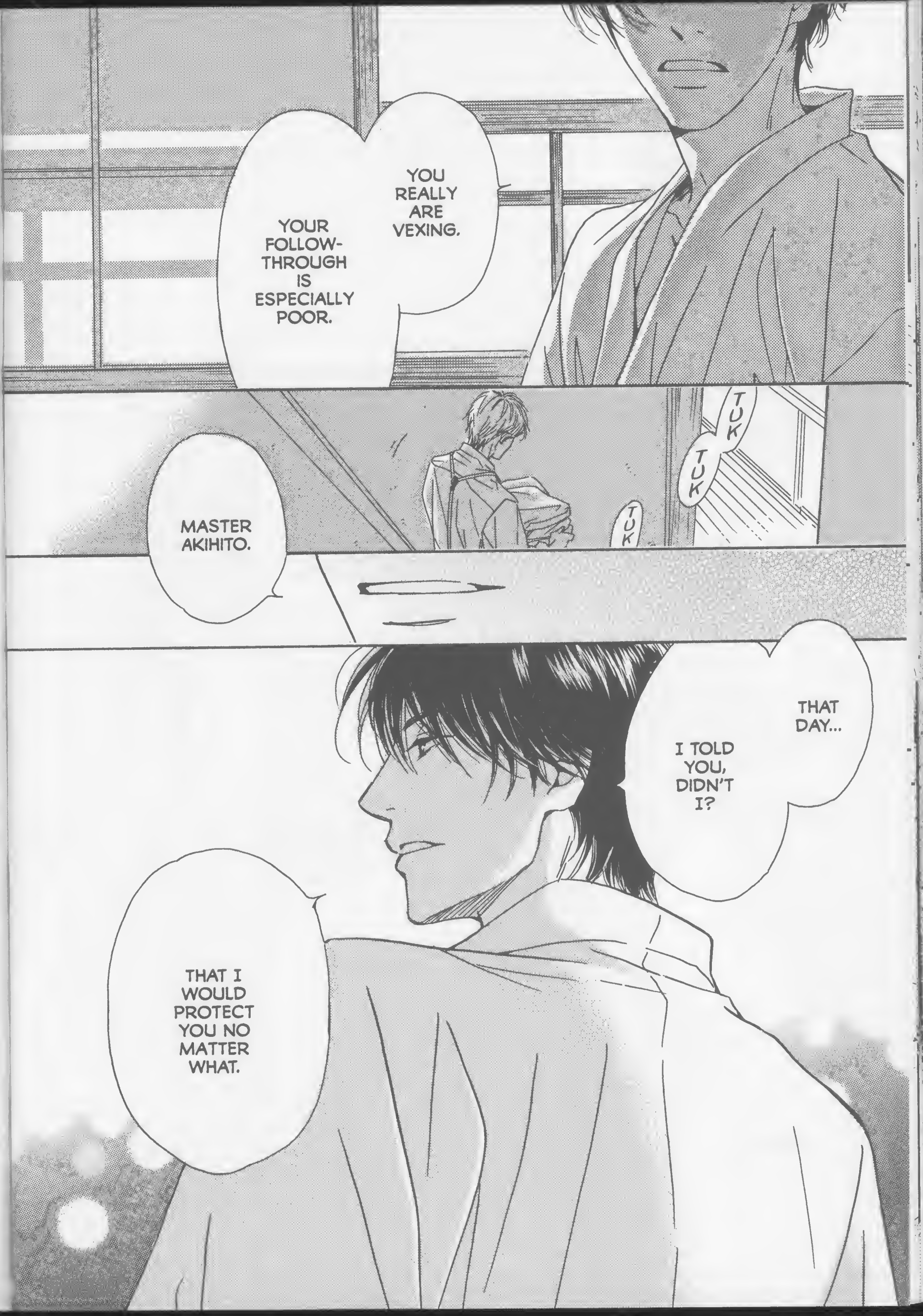

NGH
UP TO NOW... WHAT WAS IT ALL FOR?
HA NGH
THIS DESPITE THE FACT THAT I KNEW I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO BE APART FROM HIM IF THIS HAPPENED.
NO...
I HATE THE ME WHO ACTS SO RASHLY LIKE THIS.
HA
HA
NO...
I NEVER THOUGHT A TIME WOULD COME WHEN I WAS SO HAPPY I COULD CRY...
THIS HEAT...
MASTER AKIHITO...

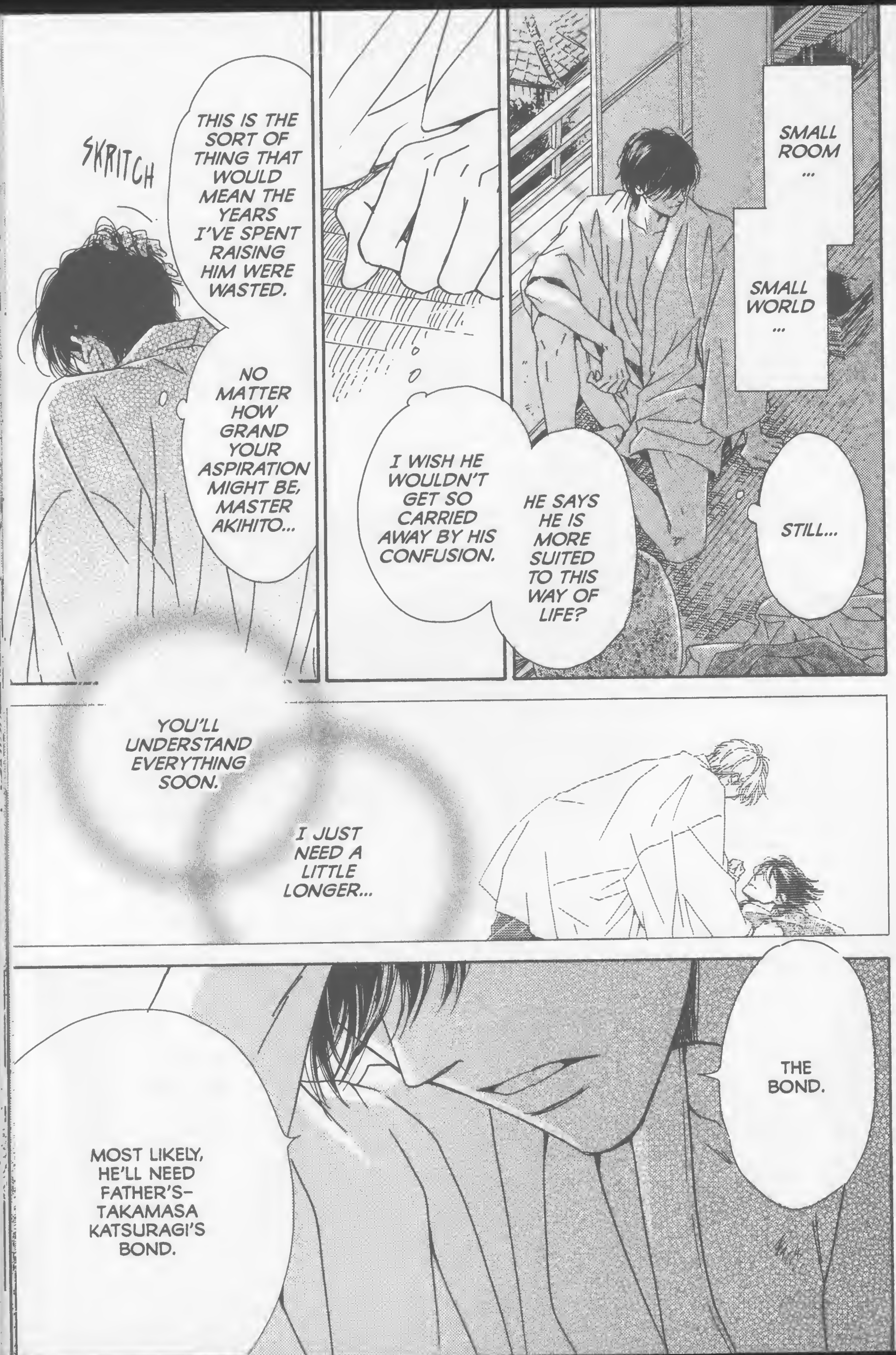

KLAK
KLAK
KLAK
SHHHH
KLAK KLAK
OH!
I'VE GOT SOOT...
...ON MY SLEEVE.
RIGHT!
SPLOOSH
ALL THAT'S LEFT IS A CHANGE OF UNDERWEAR...
...
MINE'LL BE FINE, RIGHT?

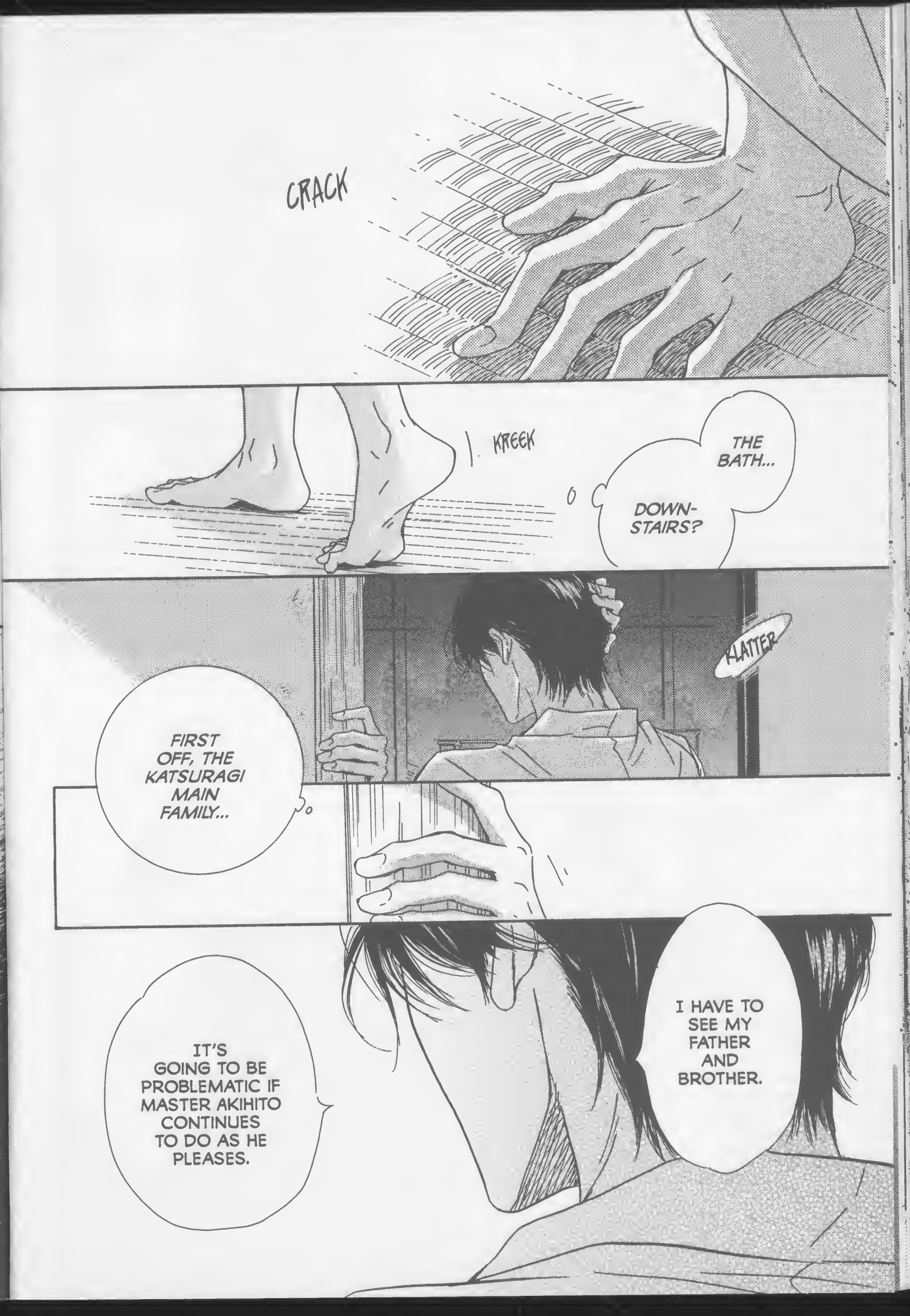

≡
KLATTER
KATSURAGI.
I BOILED SOME WATER DOWNSTAIRS.
USE IT.
...
CAN YOU MOVE?
SLAP

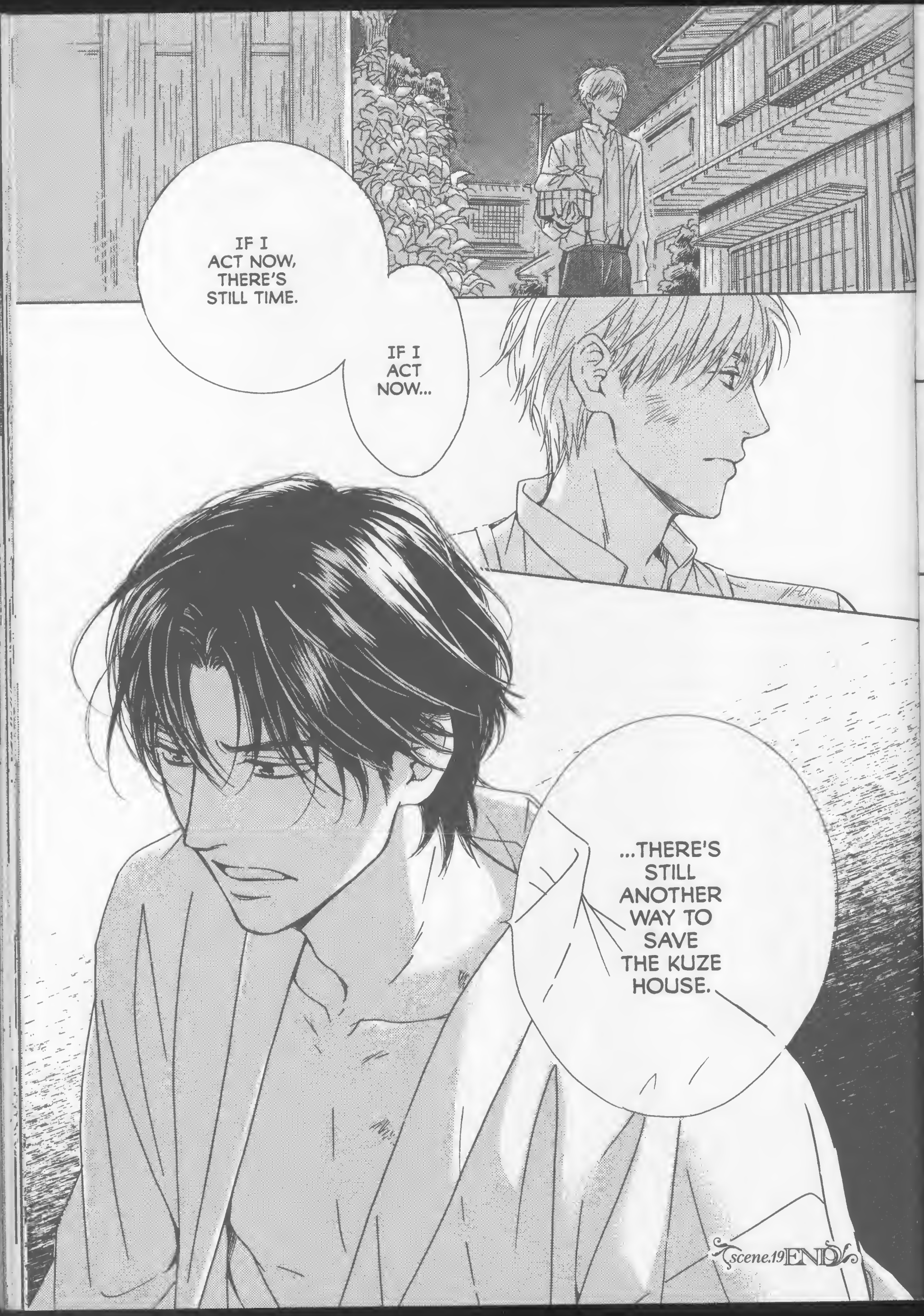

...
I'M...
...GOING TO THE BATHS NEAR HERE.
I'LL CALL A CAR FOR YOU.
DON'T BE HERE WHEN I GET BACK.
ALL RIGHT, THEN...


KLATTER
BAM
SHF
...
HONESTLY...


YOU REALLY ARE VEXING.
YOUR FOLLOW-THROUGH IS ESPECIALLY POOR.
TUK TUK TUK
MASTER AKIHITO.
THAT DAY...
I TOLD YOU, DIDN'T I?
THAT I WOULD PROTECT YOU NO MATTER WHAT.


SMALL ROOM ...
SMALL WORLD ...
STILL...
HE SAYS HE IS MORE SUITED TO THIS WAY OF LIFE?
I WISH HE WOULDN'T GET SO CARRIED AWAY BY HIS CONFUSION.
THIS IS THE SORT OF THING THAT WOULD MEAN THE YEARS I'VE SPENT RAISING HIM WERE WASTED.
SKRITCH
NO MATTER HOW GRAND YOUR ASPIRATION MIGHT BE, MASTER AKIHITO...
YOU'LL UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING SOON.
I JUST NEED A LITTLE LONGER...
THE BOND.
MOST LIKELY, HE'LL NEED FATHER'S—TAKAMASA KATSURAGI'S BOND.

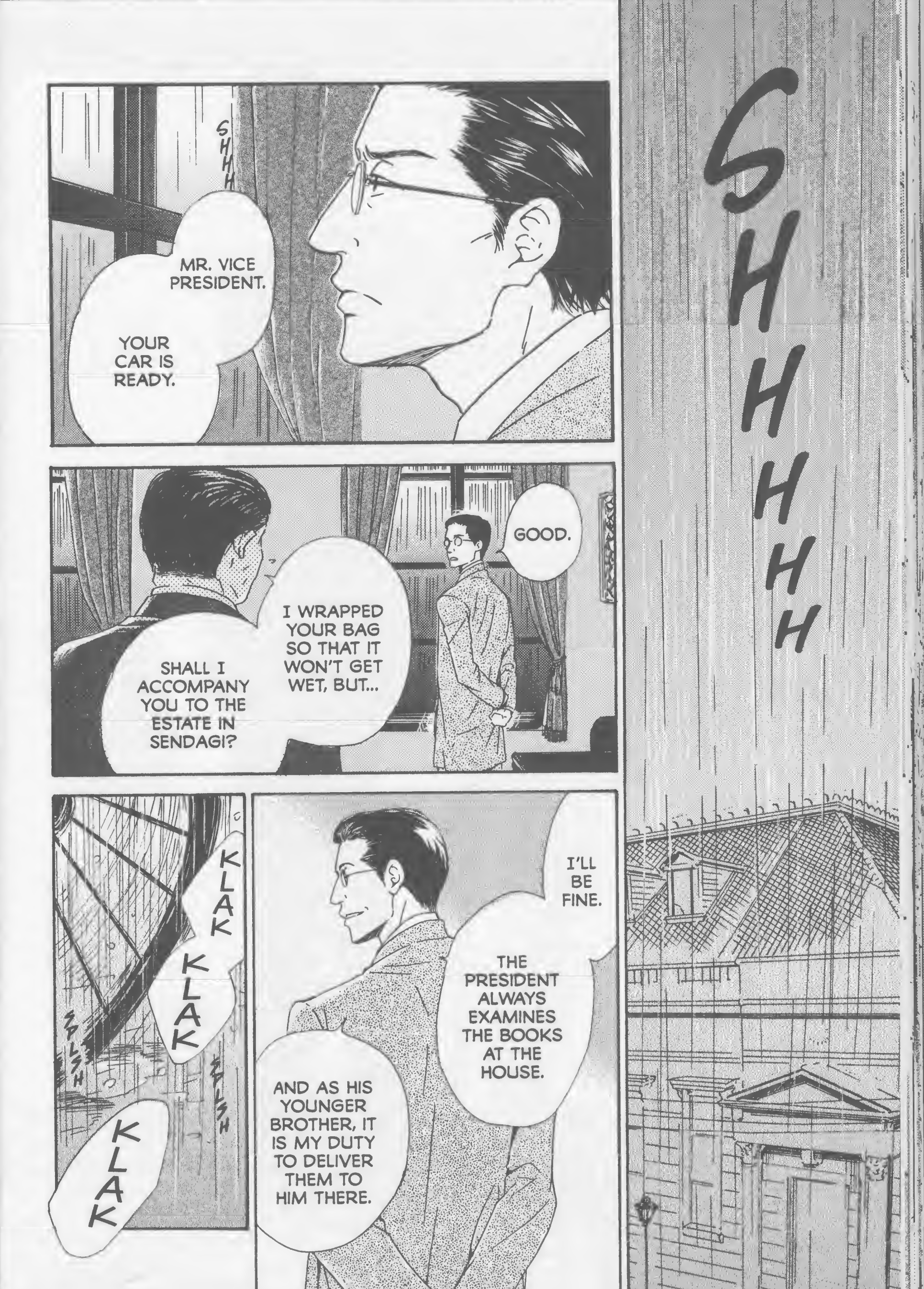

CRACK
KREEK
THE BATH... DOWNSTAIRS?
KLATTER
FIRST OFF, THE KATSURAGI MAIN FAMILY...
I HAVE TO SEE MY FATHER AND BROTHER.
IT'S GOING TO BE PROBLEMATIC IF MASTER AKIHITO CONTINUES TO DO AS HE PLEASES.

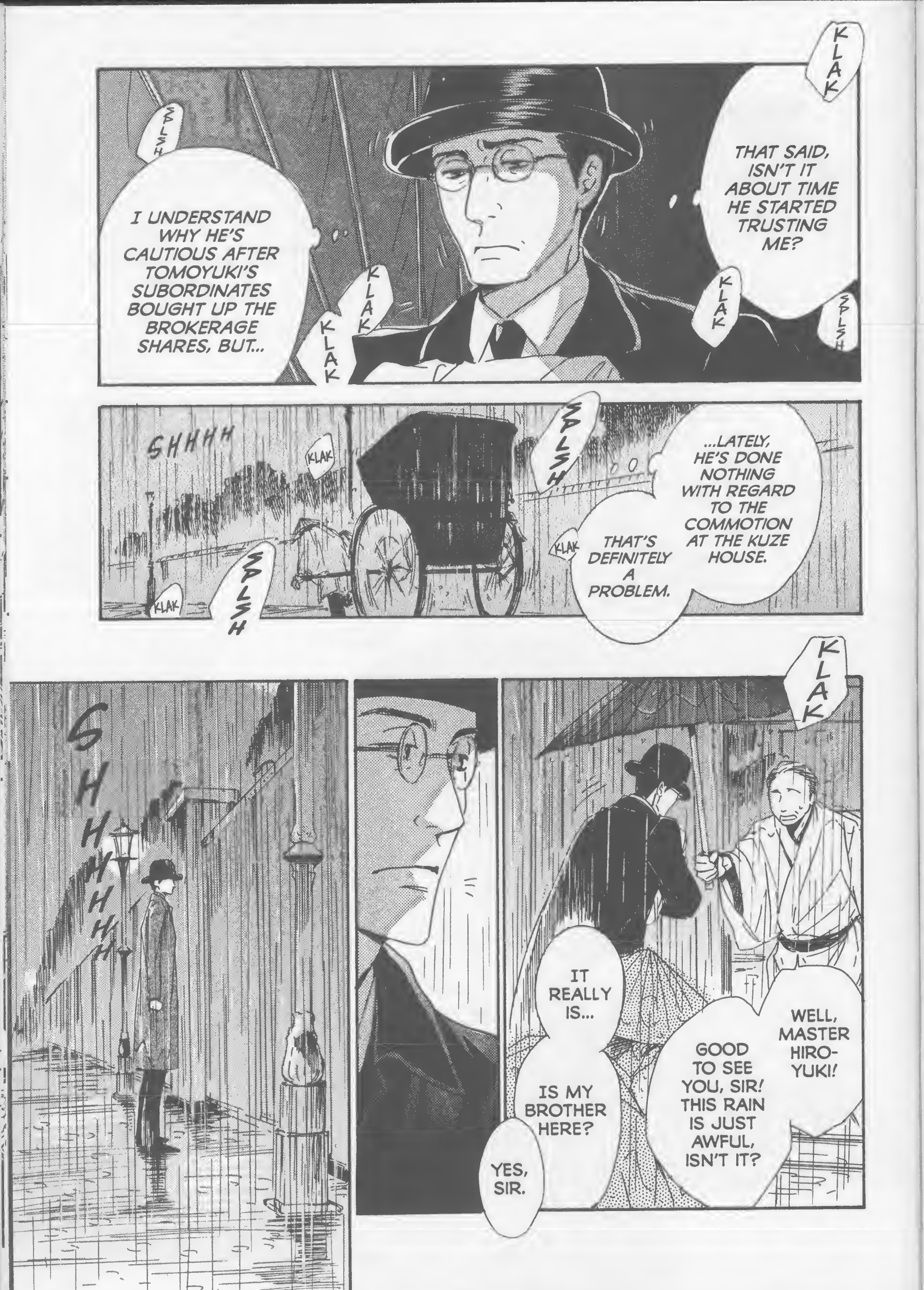

IF I ACT NOW, THERE'S STILL TIME.
IF I ACT NOW...
...THERE'S STILL ANOTHER WAY TO SAVE THE KUZE HOUSE.
scene.19 END

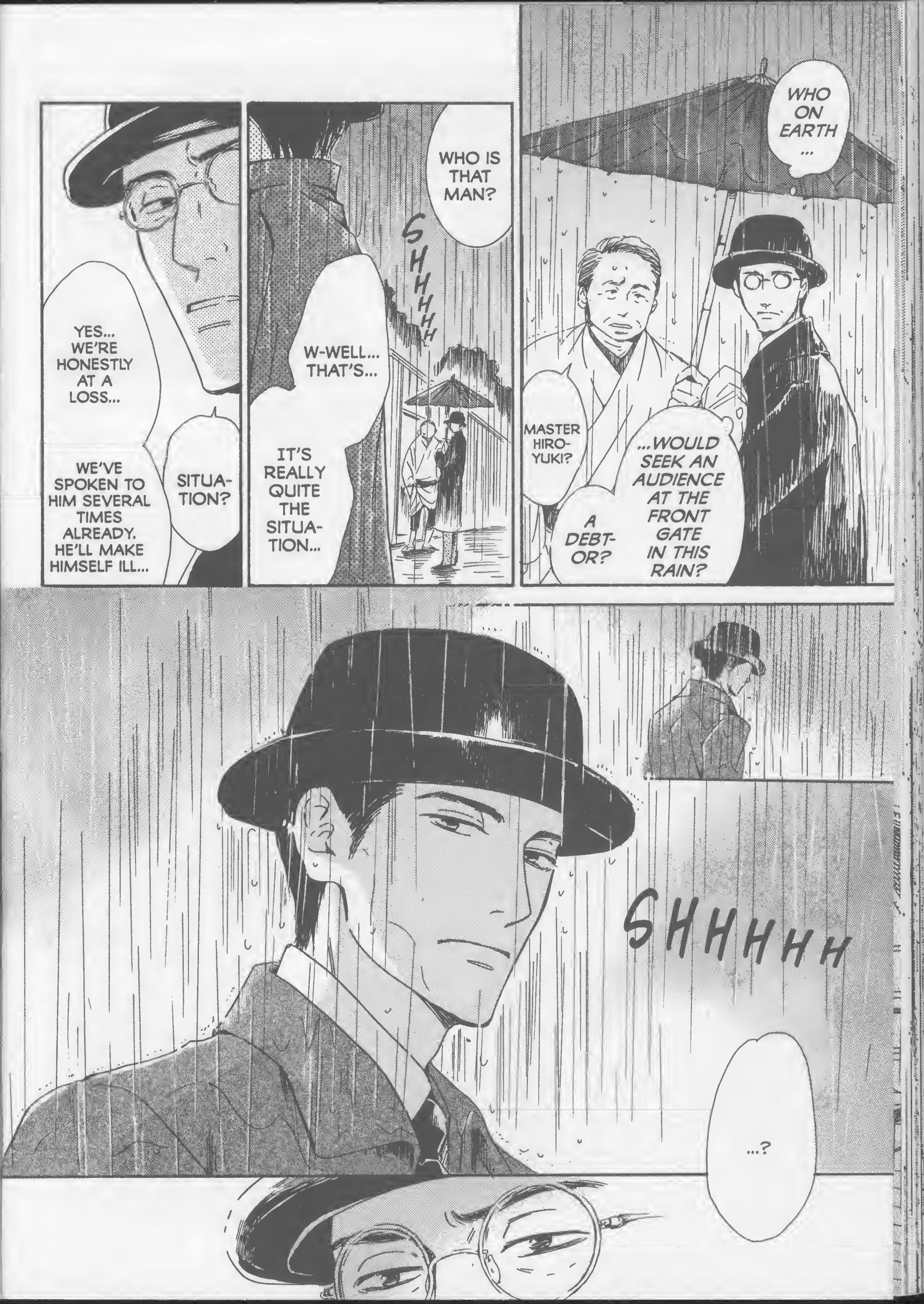
憂鬱な朝

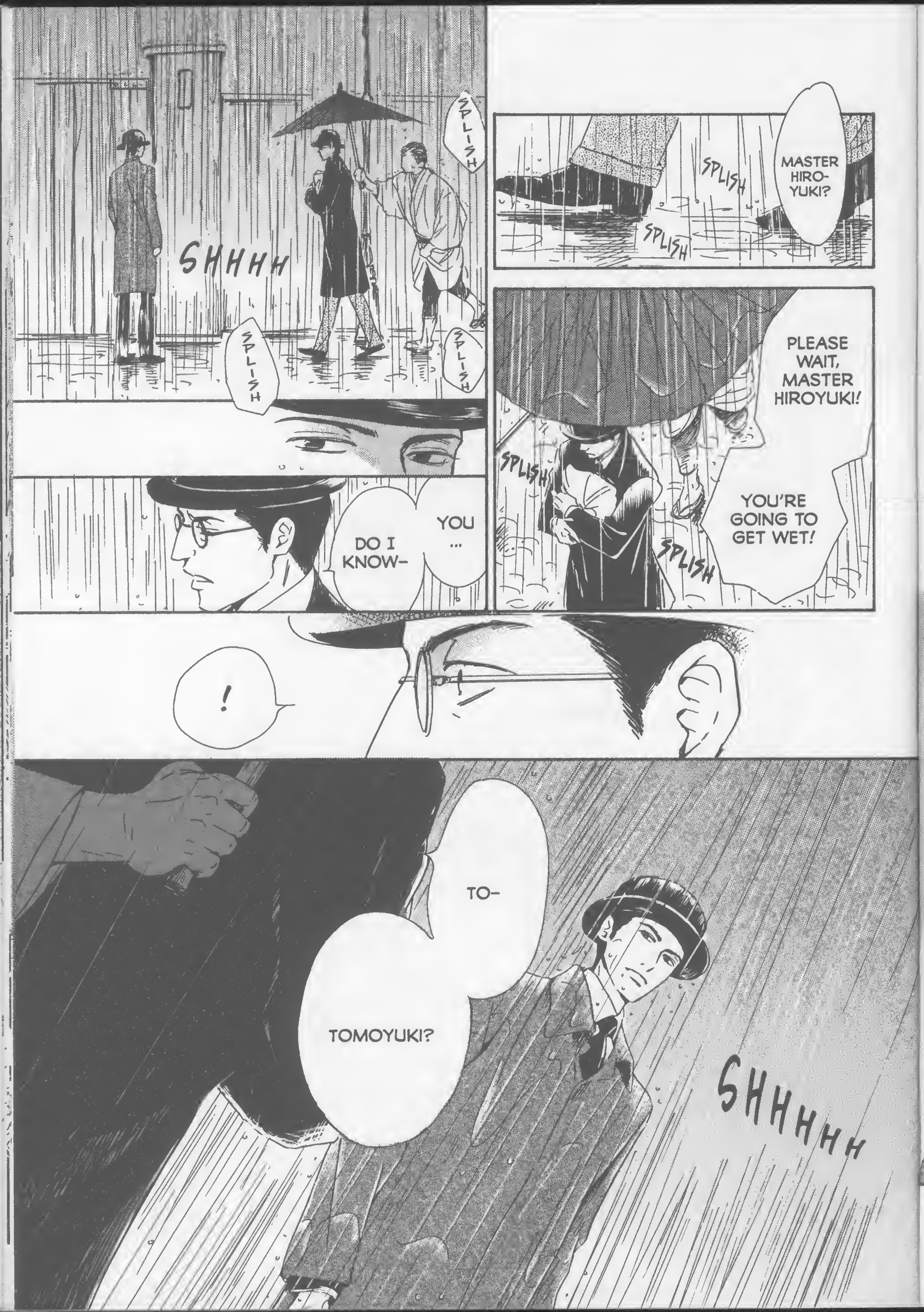
scene 20

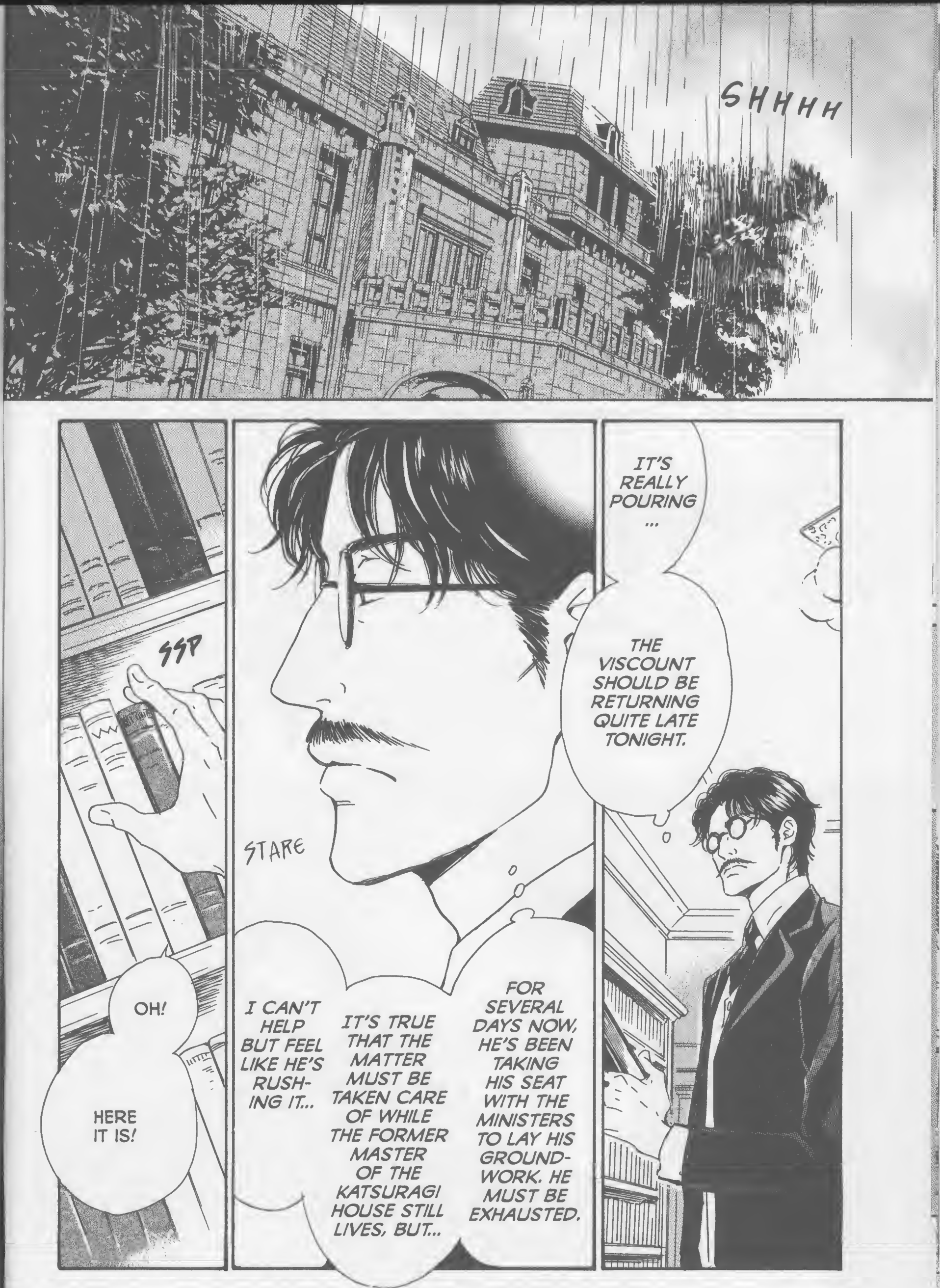
憂鬱な朝

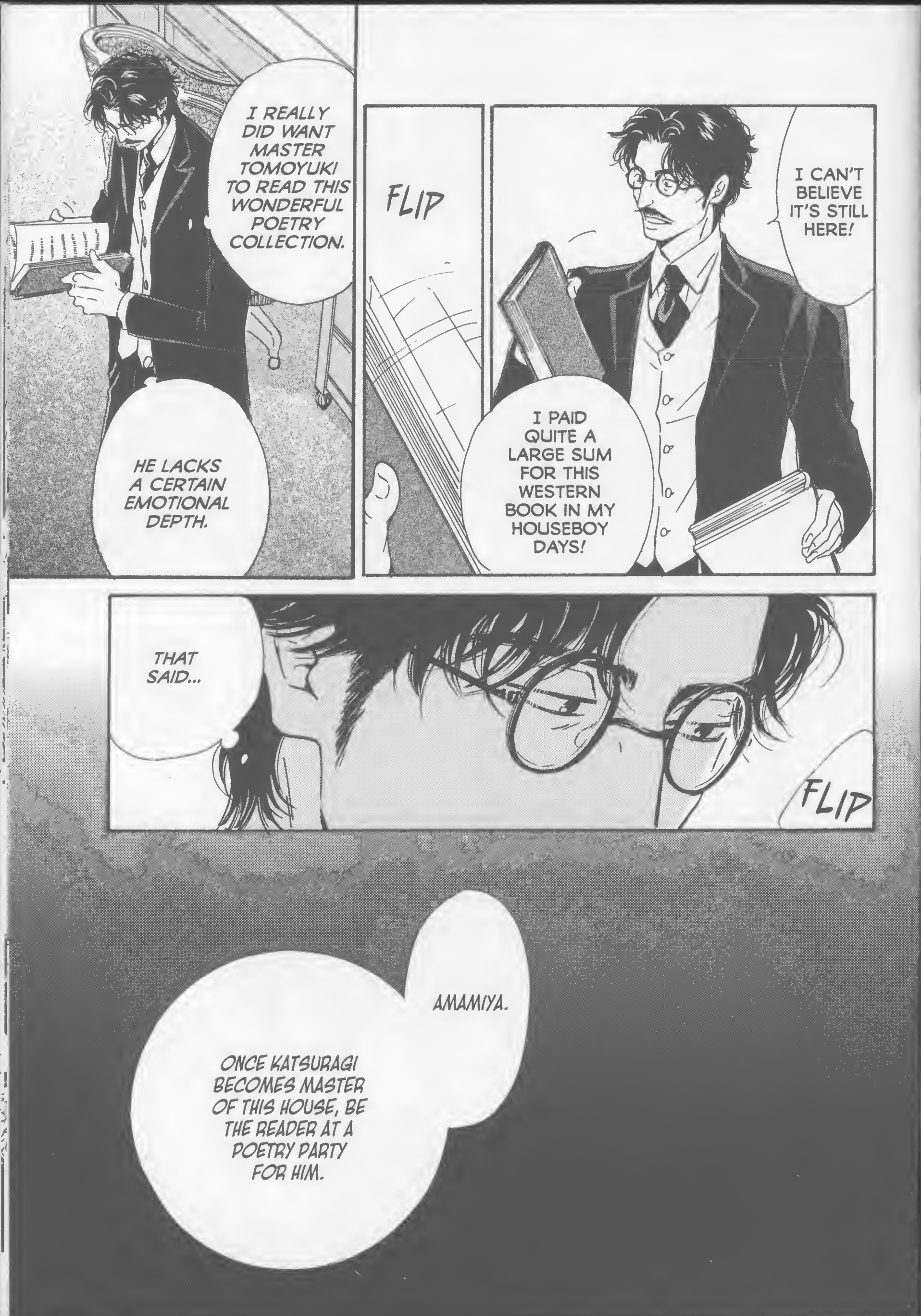

SHHHHHH
SHHH
MR. VICE PRESIDENT.
YOUR CAR IS READY.
GOOD.
I WRAPPED YOUR BAG SO THAT IT WON'T GET WET, BUT...
SHALL I ACCOMPANY YOU TO THE ESTATE IN SENDAGI?
I'LL BE FINE.
THE PRESIDENT ALWAYS EXAMINES THE BOOKS AT THE HOUSE.
AND AS HIS YOUNGER BROTHER, IT IS MY DUTY TO DELIVER THEM TO HIM THERE.
KLAK
KLAK
KLAK
SPLSH
SPLSH

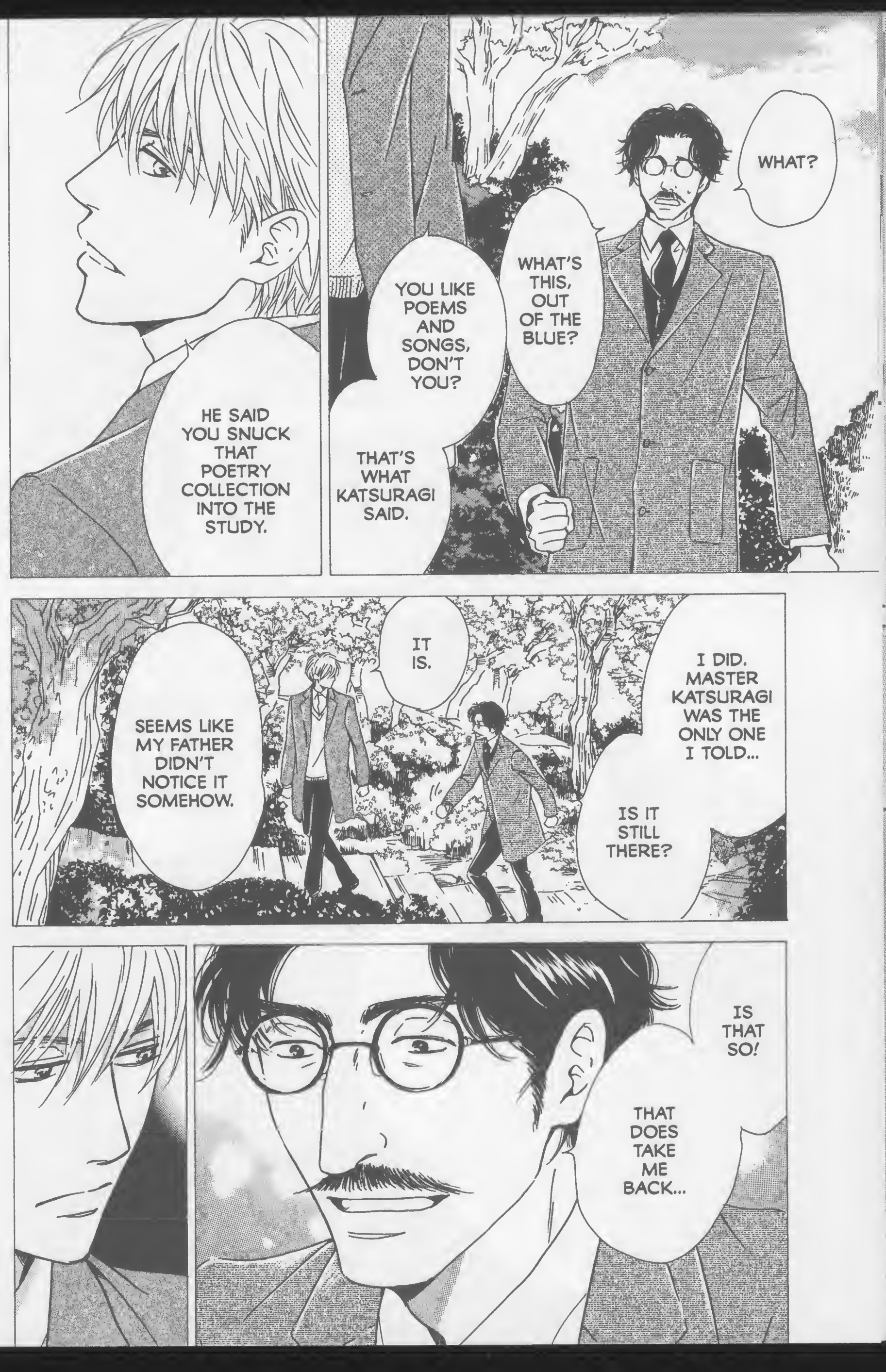

KLAK
THAT SAID, ISN'T IT ABOUT TIME HE STARTED TRUSTING ME?
I UNDERSTAND WHY HE'S CAUTIOUS AFTER TOMOYUKI'S SUBORDINATES BOUGHT UP THE BROKERAGE SHARES, BUT...
SPLSH
KLAK
KLAK
KLAK
SPLSH
SPLSH
...LATELY, HE'S DONE NOTHING WITH REGARD TO THE COMMOTION AT THE KUZE HOUSE.
THAT'S DEFINITELY A PROBLEM.
KLAK
SHHHH
KLAK
KLAK
SPLSH
KLAK
WELL, MASTER HIRO-YUKI!
GOOD TO SEE YOU, SIR! THIS RAIN IS JUST AWFUL, ISN'T IT?
IT REALLY IS...
IS MY BROTHER HERE?
YES, SIR.
SHHHHHHH

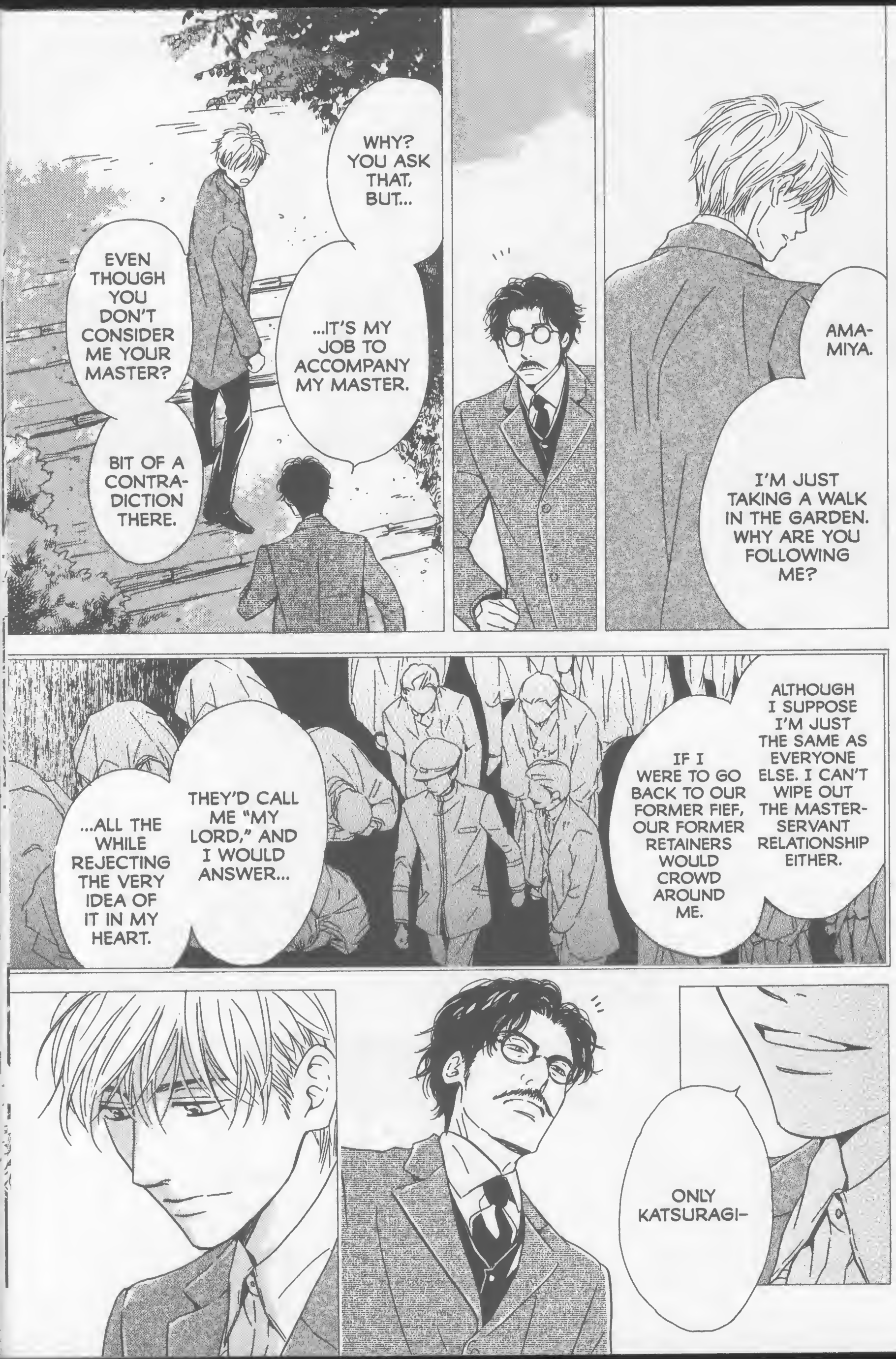

WHO ON EARTH ...
...WOULD SEEK AN AUDIENCE AT THE FRONT GATE IN THIS RAIN?
MASTER HIRO-YUKI!?
A DEBT-OR?
WHO IS THAT MAN?
SHHHHH
W-WELL... THAT'S...
IT'S REALLY QUITE THE SITUA-TION...
SITUA-TION?
YES... WE'RE HONESTLY AT A LOSS...
WE'VE SPOKEN TO HIM SEVERAL TIMES ALREADY. HE'LL MAKE HIMSELF ILL...
SHHHHHH
...?

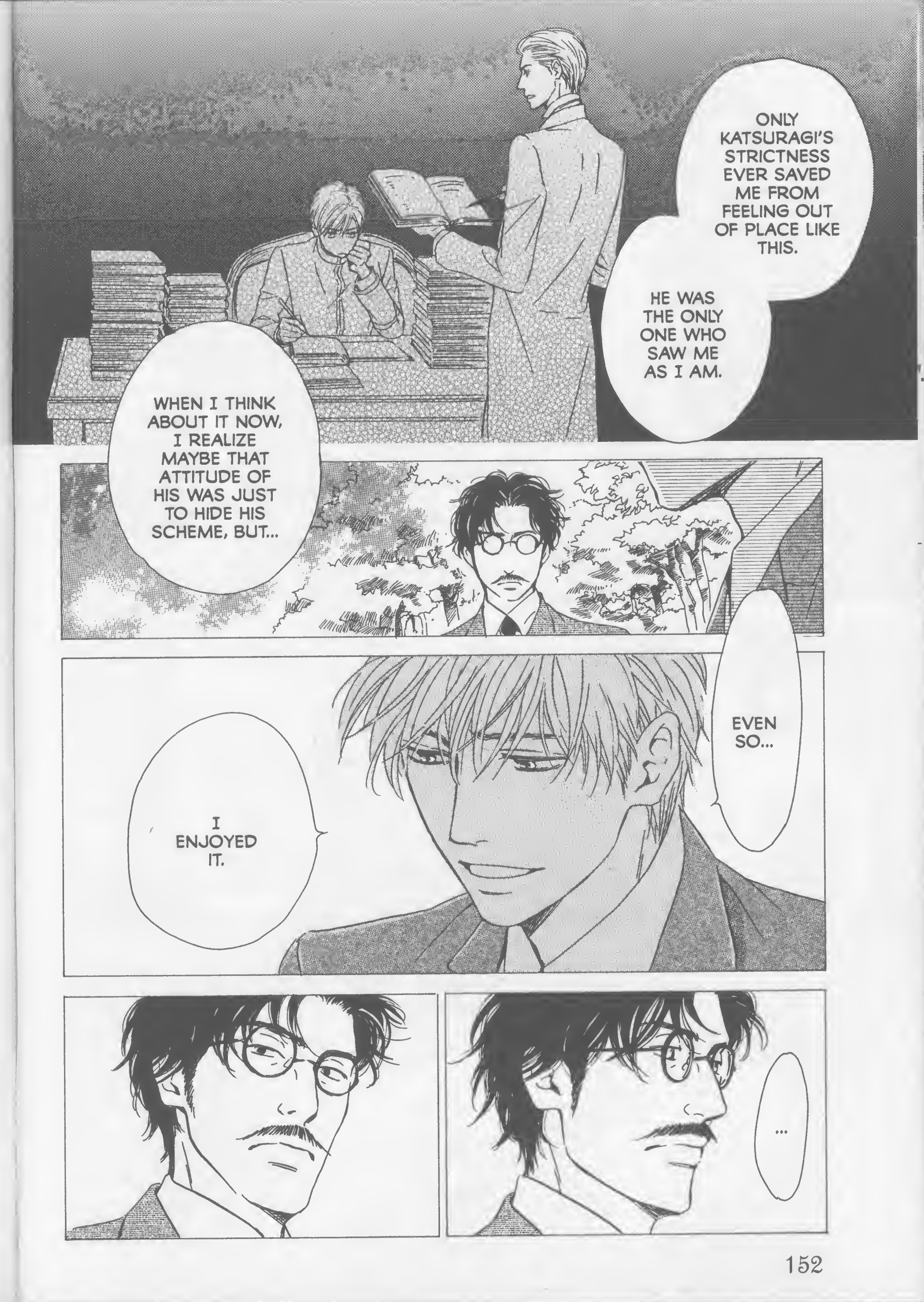

MASTER HIRO-YUKI?
SPLISH
SPLISH
SPLISH
PLEASE WAIT, MASTER HIROYUKI!
YOU'RE GOING TO GET WET!
SPLISH
SPLISH
SPLISH
SHHHH
SPLISH
SPLISH
YOU ...
DO I KNOW-
!
TO-
TOMOYUKI?
SHHHHH

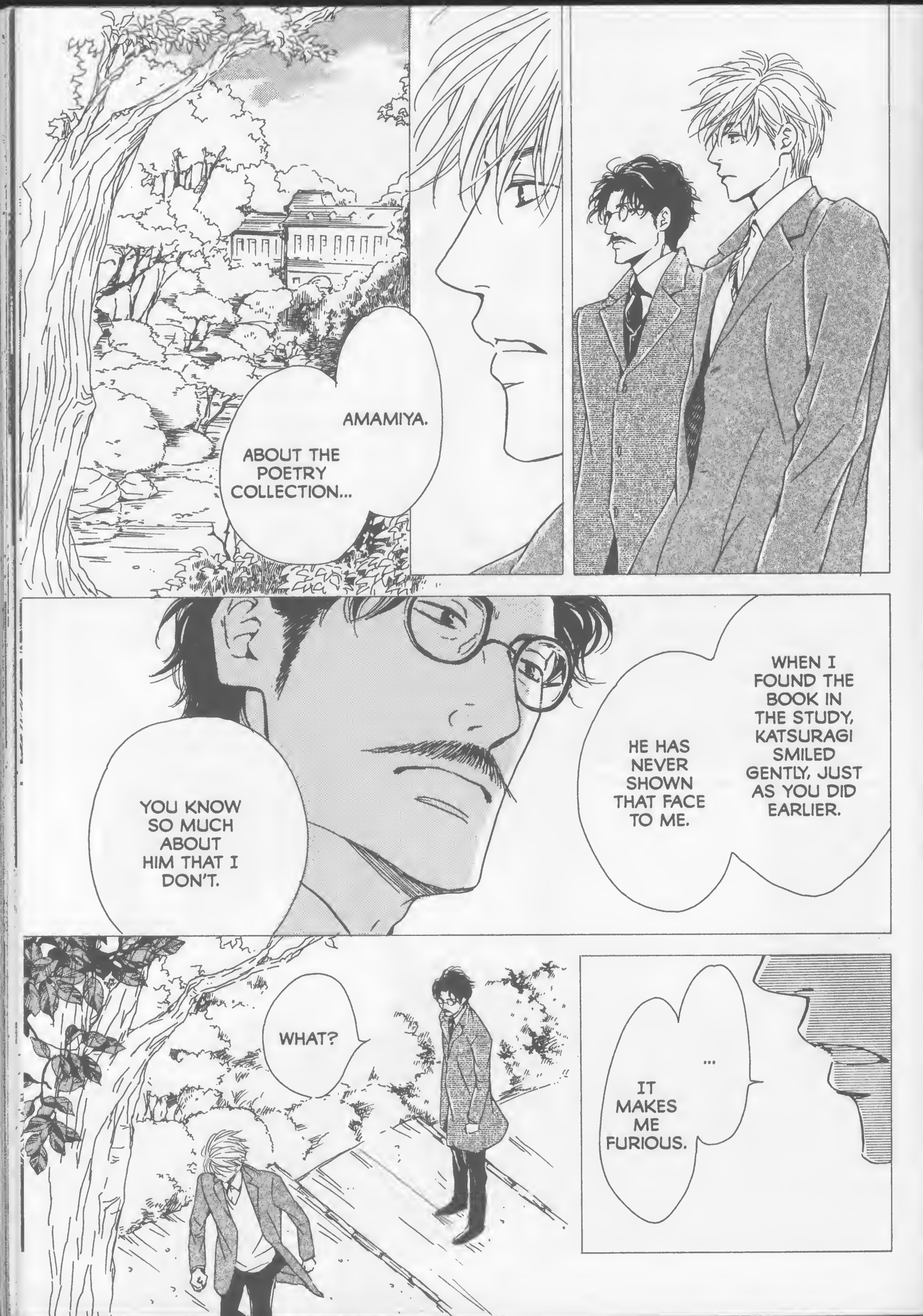

SHHHH
IT'S REALLY POURING...
THE VISCOUNT SHOULD BE RETURNING QUITE LATE TONIGHT.
FOR SEVERAL DAYS NOW, HE'S BEEN TAKING HIS SEAT WITH THE MINISTERS TO LAY HIS GROUNDWORK. HE MUST BE EXHAUSTED.
IT'S TRUE THAT THE MATTER MUST BE TAKEN CARE OF WHILE THE FORMER MASTER OF THE KATSURAGI HOUSE STILL LIVES, BUT...
I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL LIKE HE'S RUSHING IT...
STARE
SSP
OH!
HERE IT IS!

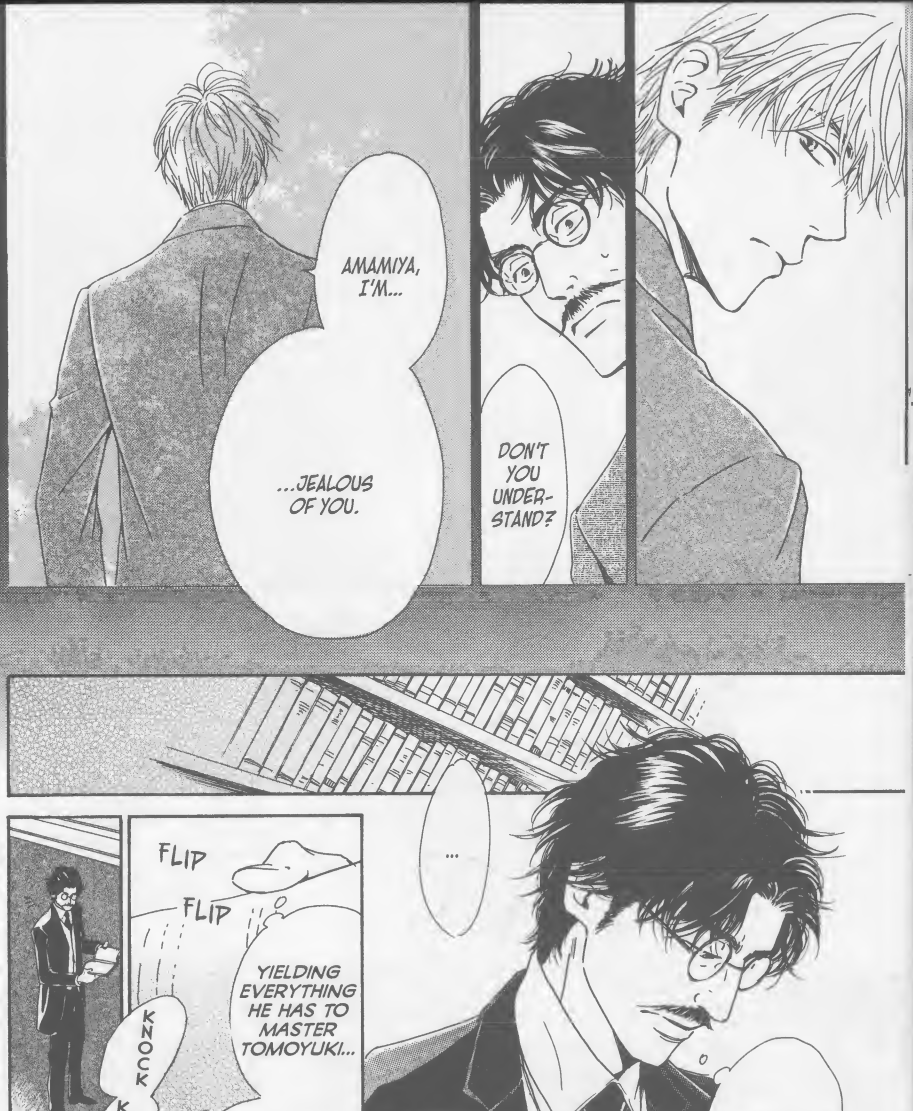

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S STILL HERE!
I PAID QUITE A LARGE SUM FOR THIS WESTERN BOOK IN MY HOUSEBOY DAYS!
FLIP
I REALLY DID WANT MASTER TOMOYUKI TO READ THIS WONDERFUL POETRY COLLECTION.
HE LACKS A CERTAIN EMOTIONAL DEPTH.
FLIP
THAT SAID...
AMAMIYA.
ONCE KATSURAGI BECOMES MASTER OF THIS HOUSE, BE THE READER AT A POETRY PARTY FOR HIM.

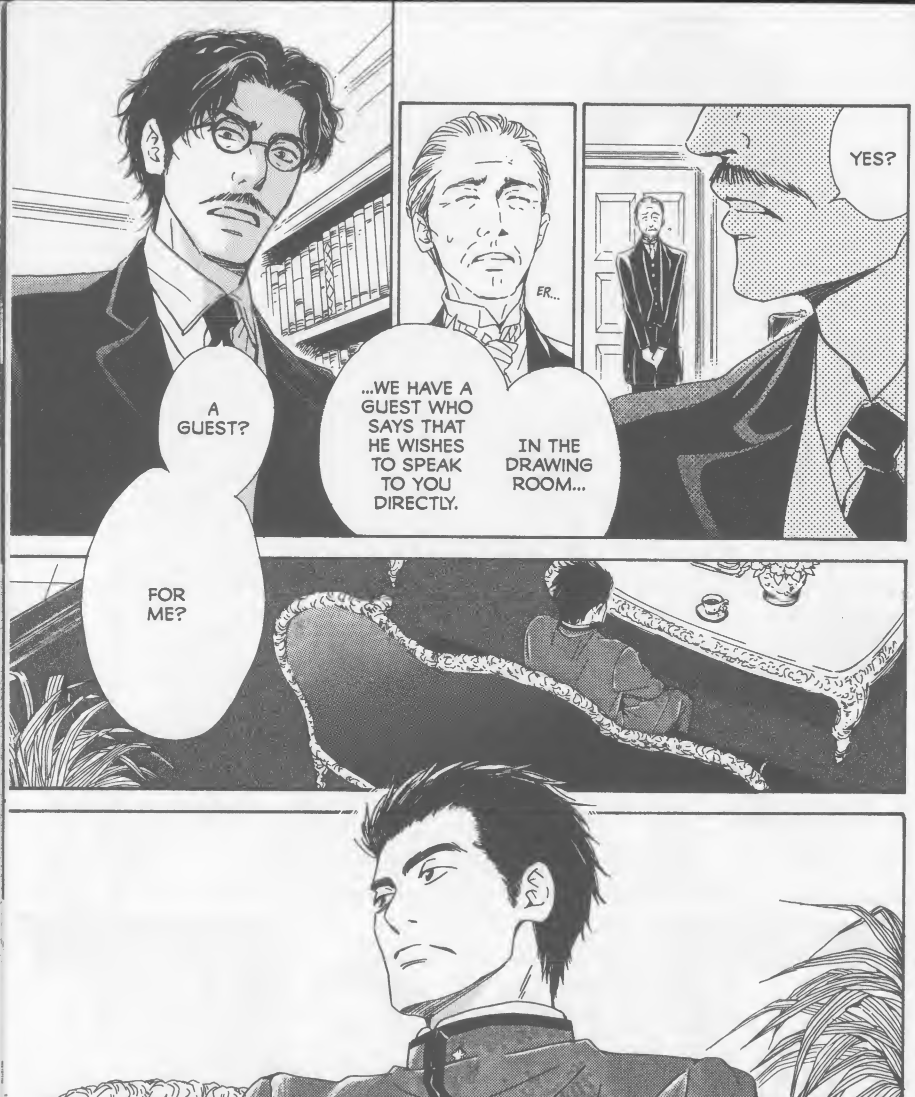

WHAT?
WHAT'S THIS, OUT OF THE BLUE?
YOU LIKE POEMS AND SONGS, DON'T YOU?
THAT'S WHAT KATSURAGI SAID.
HE SAID YOU SNUCK THAT POETRY COLLECTION INTO THE STUDY.
I DID. MASTER KATSURAGI WAS THE ONLY ONE I TOLD...
IS IT STILL THERE?
IT IS.
SEEMS LIKE MY FATHER DIDN'T NOTICE IT SOMEHOW.
IS THAT SO!
THAT DOES TAKE ME BACK...

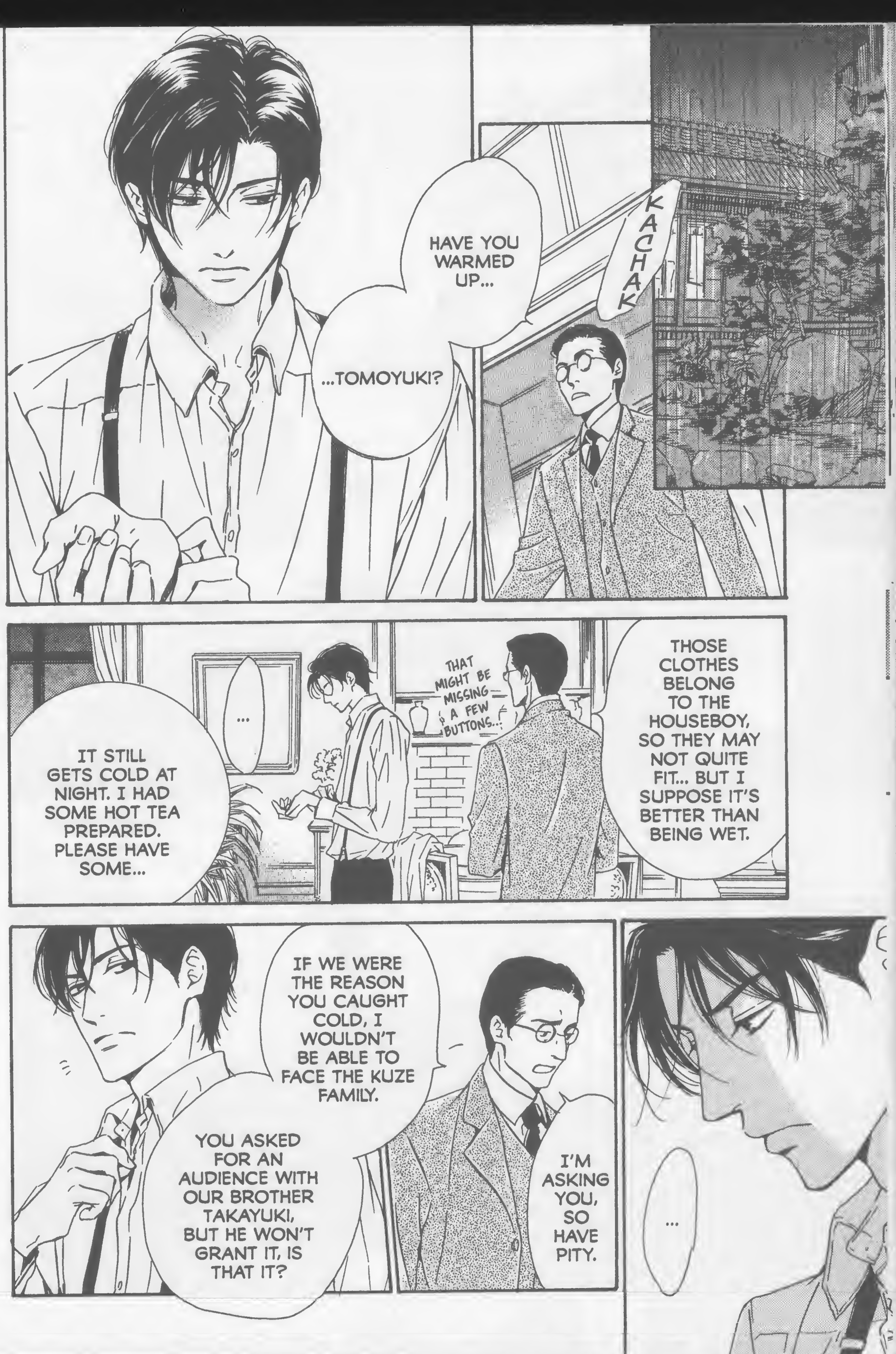

AMA-MIYA.
I'M JUST TAKING A WALK IN THE GARDEN. WHY ARE YOU FOLLOWING ME?
WHY? YOU ASK THAT, BUT...
...IT'S MY JOB TO ACCOMPANY MY MASTER.
EVEN THOUGH YOU DON'T CONSIDER ME YOUR MASTER?
BIT OF A CONTRADICTION THERE.
ALTHOUGH I SUPPOSE I'M JUST THE SAME AS EVERYONE ELSE. I CAN'T WIPE OUT THE MASTER-SERVANT RELATIONSHIP EITHER.
IF I WERE TO GO BACK TO OUR FORMER FIEF, OUR FORMER RETAINERS WOULD CROWD AROUND ME.
THEY'D CALL ME "MY LORD," AND I WOULD ANSWER...
...ALL THE WHILE REJECTING THE VERY IDEA OF IT IN MY HEART.
ONLY KATSURAGI–

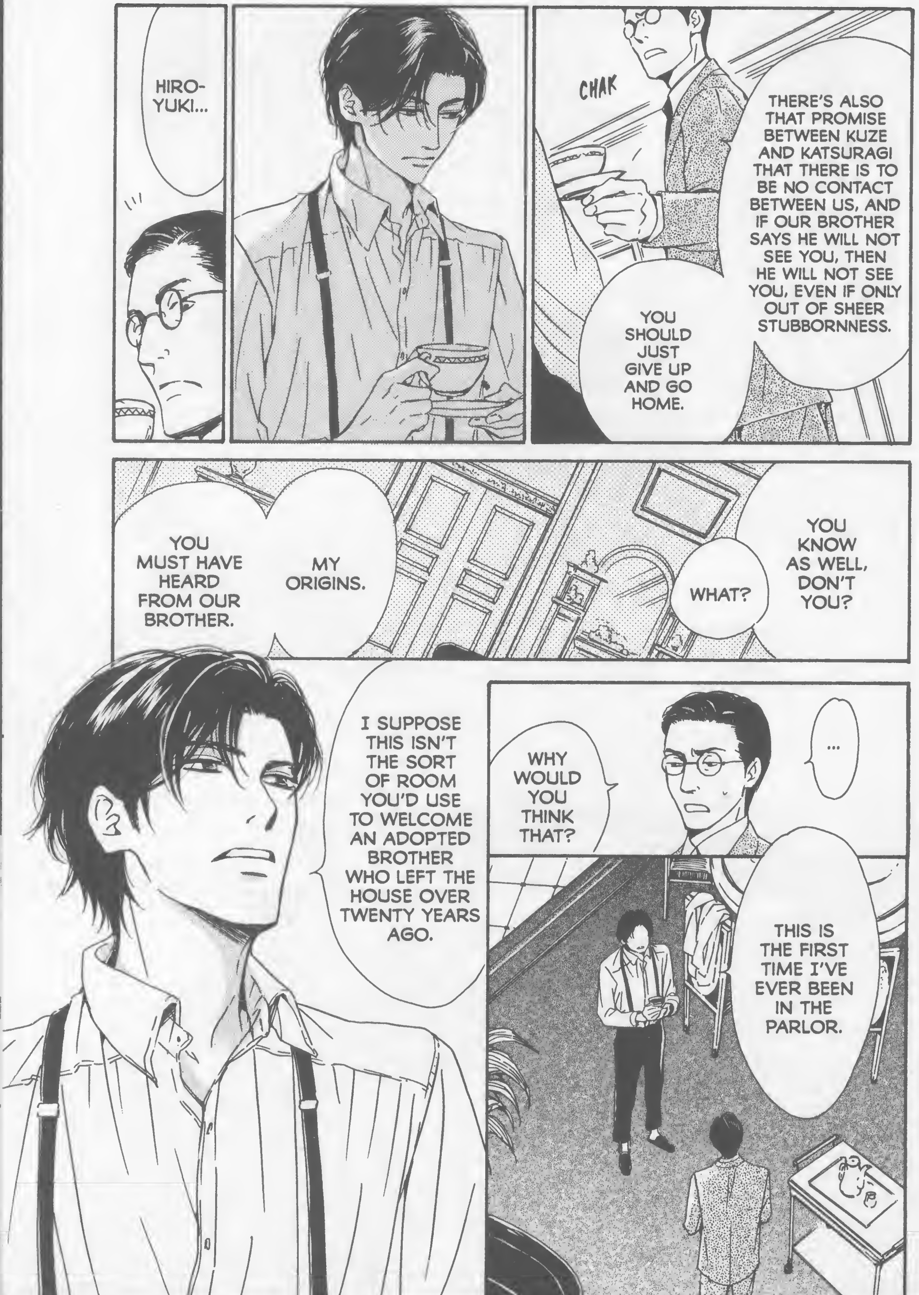

ONLY KATSURAGI'S STRICTNESS EVER SAVED ME FROM FEELING OUT OF PLACE LIKE THIS.
HE WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO SAW ME AS I AM.
WHEN I THINK ABOUT IT NOW, I REALIZE MAYBE THAT ATTITUDE OF HIS WAS JUST TO HIDE HIS SCHEME, BUT...
EVEN SO...
I ENJOYED IT.
...

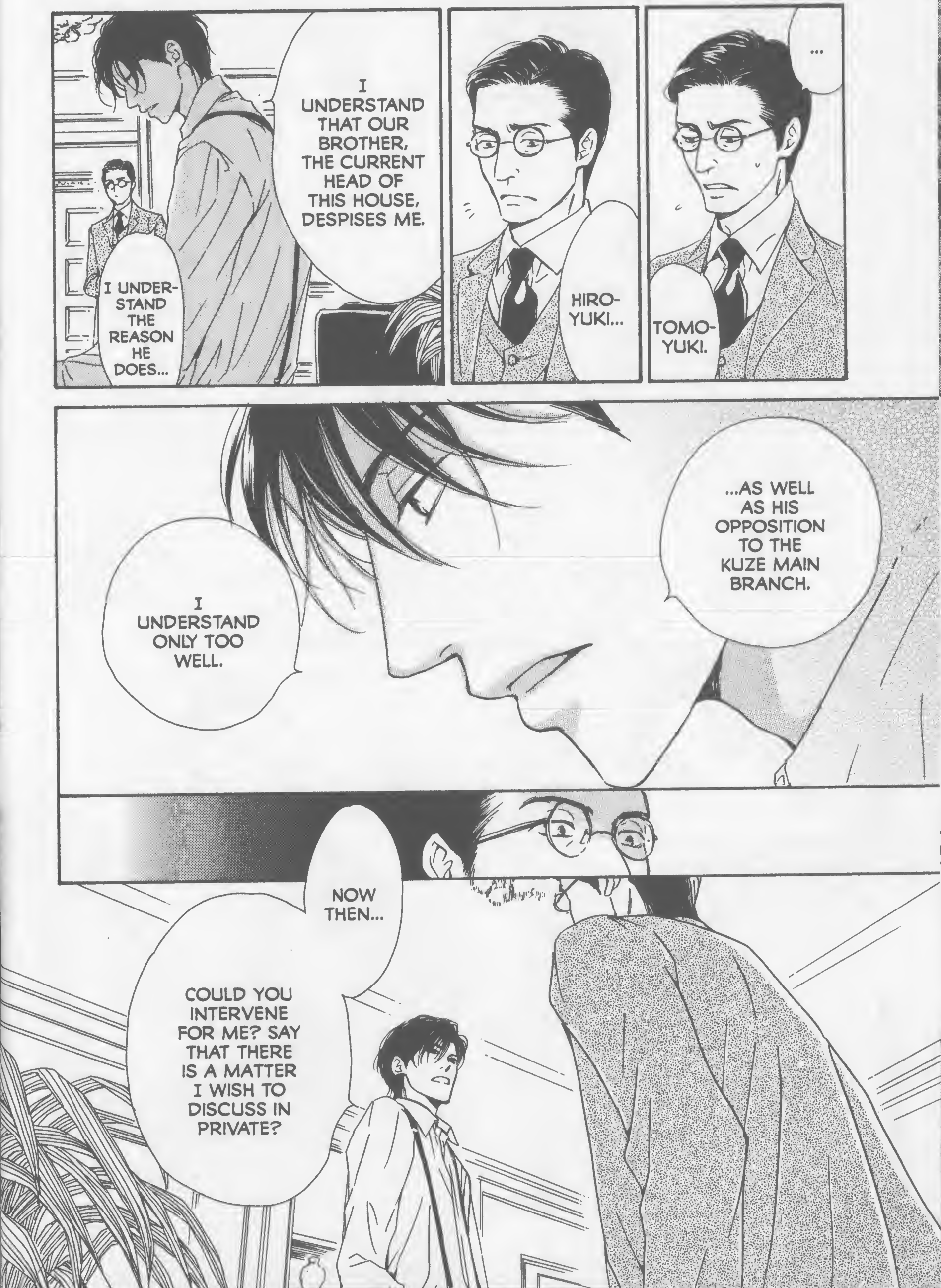

AMAMIYA.
ABOUT THE POETRY COLLECTION...
WHEN I FOUND THE BOOK IN THE STUDY, KATSURAGI SMILED GENTLY, JUST AS YOU DID EARLIER.
HE HAS NEVER SHOWN THAT FACE TO ME.
YOU KNOW SO MUCH ABOUT HIM THAT I DON'T.
...
IT MAKES ME FURIOUS.
WHAT?

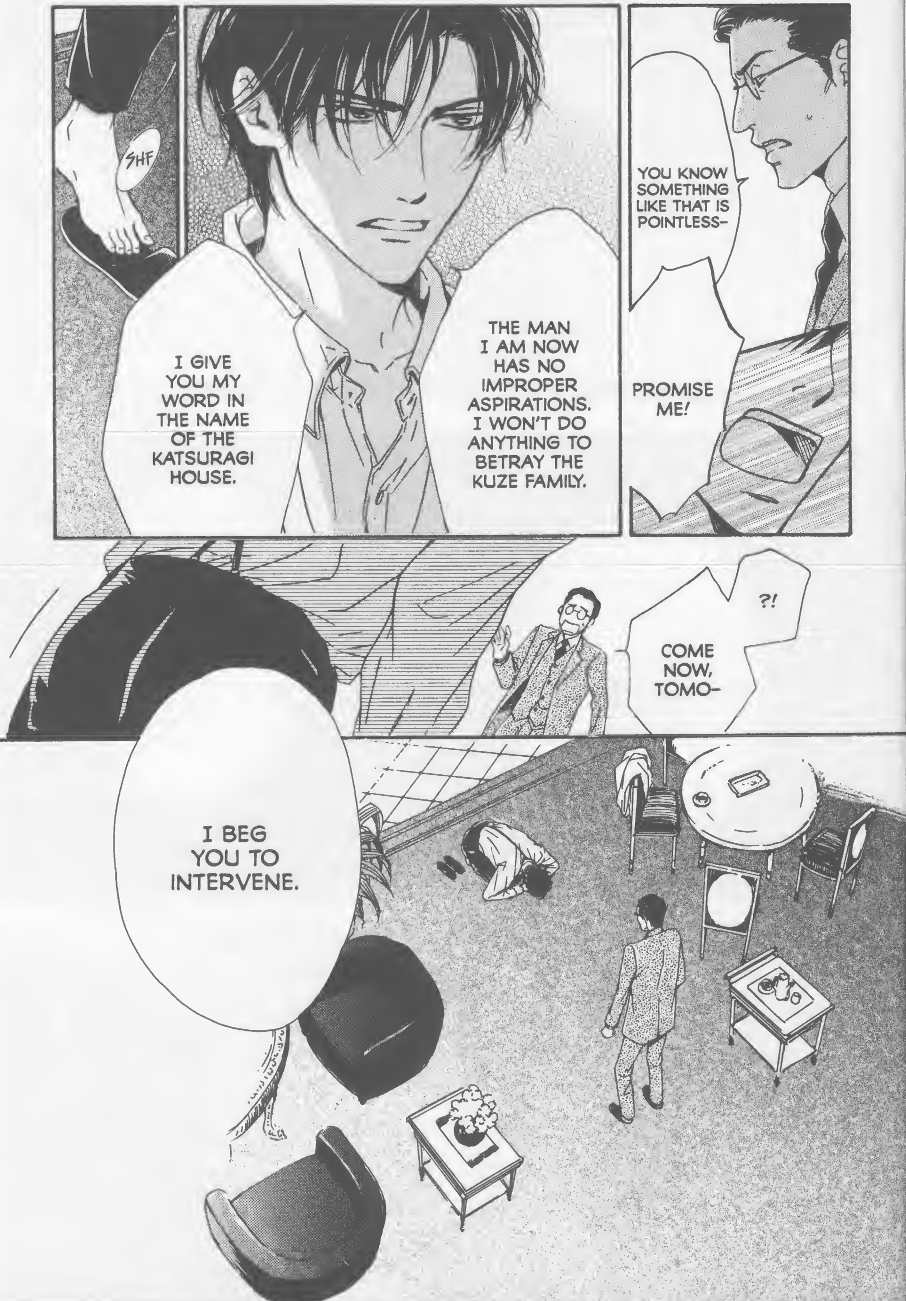

AMAMIYA, I'M...
...JEALOUS OF YOU.
DON'T YOU UNDER-STAND?
"JEALOUS," IS HE?
AND I SUPPOSE HE'S JEALOUS IN **THAT** SORT OF WAY TOO.
...
FLIP
FLIP
YIELDING EVERYTHING HE HAS TO MASTER TOMOYUKI...
IS IT SIMPLY HIS EARNEST LOVE THAT ALLOWS HIM TO MAKE THIS DECISION WITHOUT WAVERING?
KNOCK KNOCK
MASTER AMAMIYA.

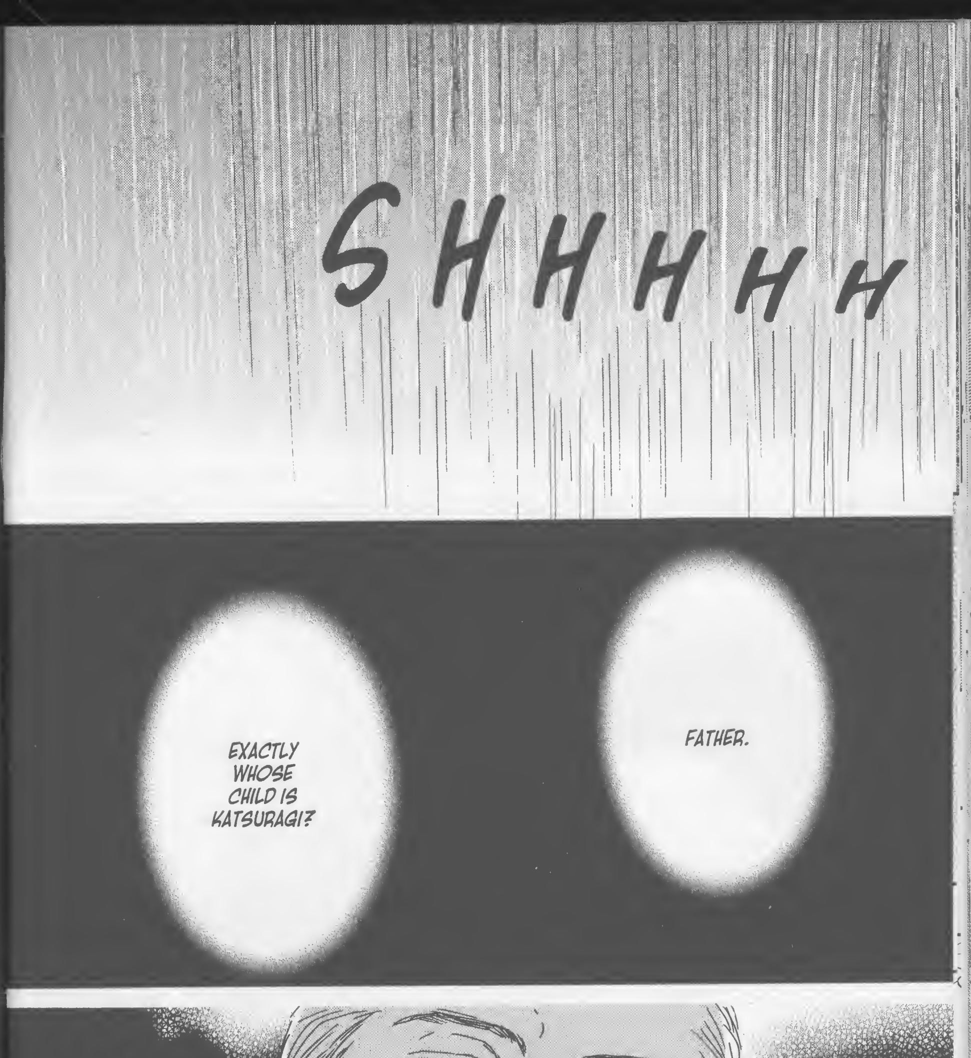

YES?
ER...
...WE HAVE A GUEST WHO SAYS THAT HE WISHES TO SPEAK TO YOU DIRECTLY.
IN THE DRAWING ROOM...
A GUEST?
FOR ME?

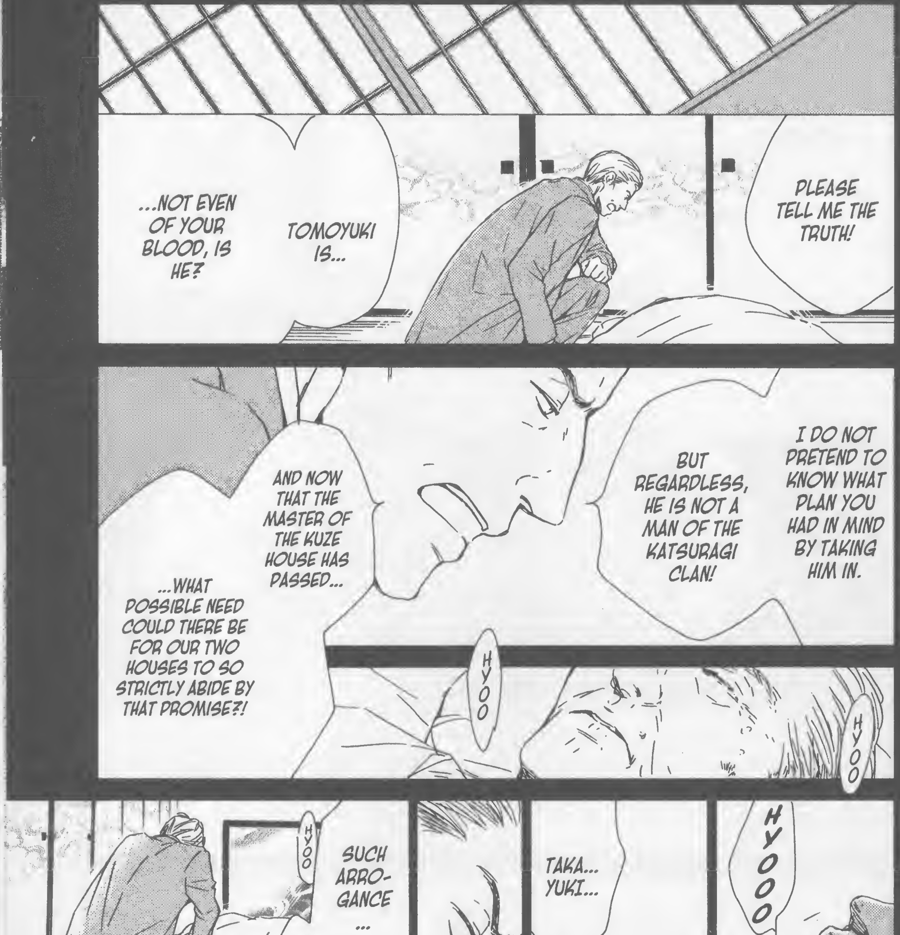

KACHAK
HAVE YOU WARMED UP...
...TOMOYUKI?
THOSE CLOTHES BELONG TO THE HOUSEBOY, SO THEY MAY NOT QUITE FIT... BUT I SUPPOSE IT'S BETTER THAN BEING WET.
THAT MIGHT BE MISSING A FEW BUTTONS...
...
IT STILL GETS COLD AT NIGHT. I HAD SOME HOT TEA PREPARED. PLEASE HAVE SOME...
...
IF WE WERE THE REASON YOU CAUGHT COLD, I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO FACE THE KUZE FAMILY.
I'M ASKING YOU, SO HAVE PITY.
YOU ASKED FOR AN AUDIENCE WITH OUR BROTHER TAKAYUKI, BUT HE WON'T GRANT IT, IS THAT IT?

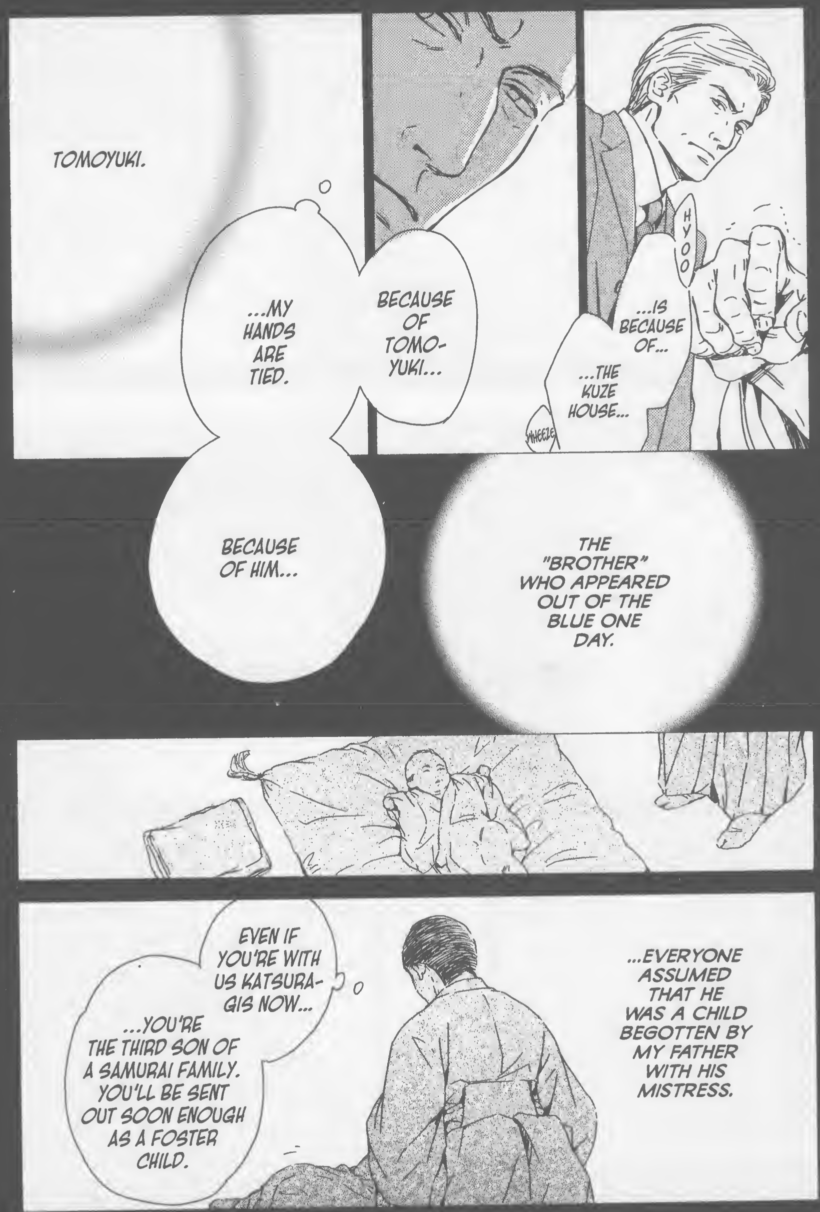

CHAK
THERE'S ALSO THAT PROMISE BETWEEN KUZE AND KATSURAGI THAT THERE IS TO BE NO CONTACT BETWEEN US, AND IF OUR BROTHER SAYS HE WILL NOT SEE YOU, THEN HE WILL NOT SEE YOU, EVEN IF ONLY OUT OF SHEER STUBBORNNESS.
YOU SHOULD JUST GIVE UP AND GO HOME.
HIRO-YUKI...
YOU KNOW AS WELL, DON'T YOU?
WHAT?
MY ORIGINS.
YOU MUST HAVE HEARD FROM OUR BROTHER.
...
WHY WOULD YOU THINK THAT?
I SUPPOSE THIS ISN'T THE SORT OF ROOM YOU'D USE TO WELCOME AN ADOPTED BROTHER WHO LEFT THE HOUSE OVER TWENTY YEARS AGO.
THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE EVER BEEN IN THE PARLOR.

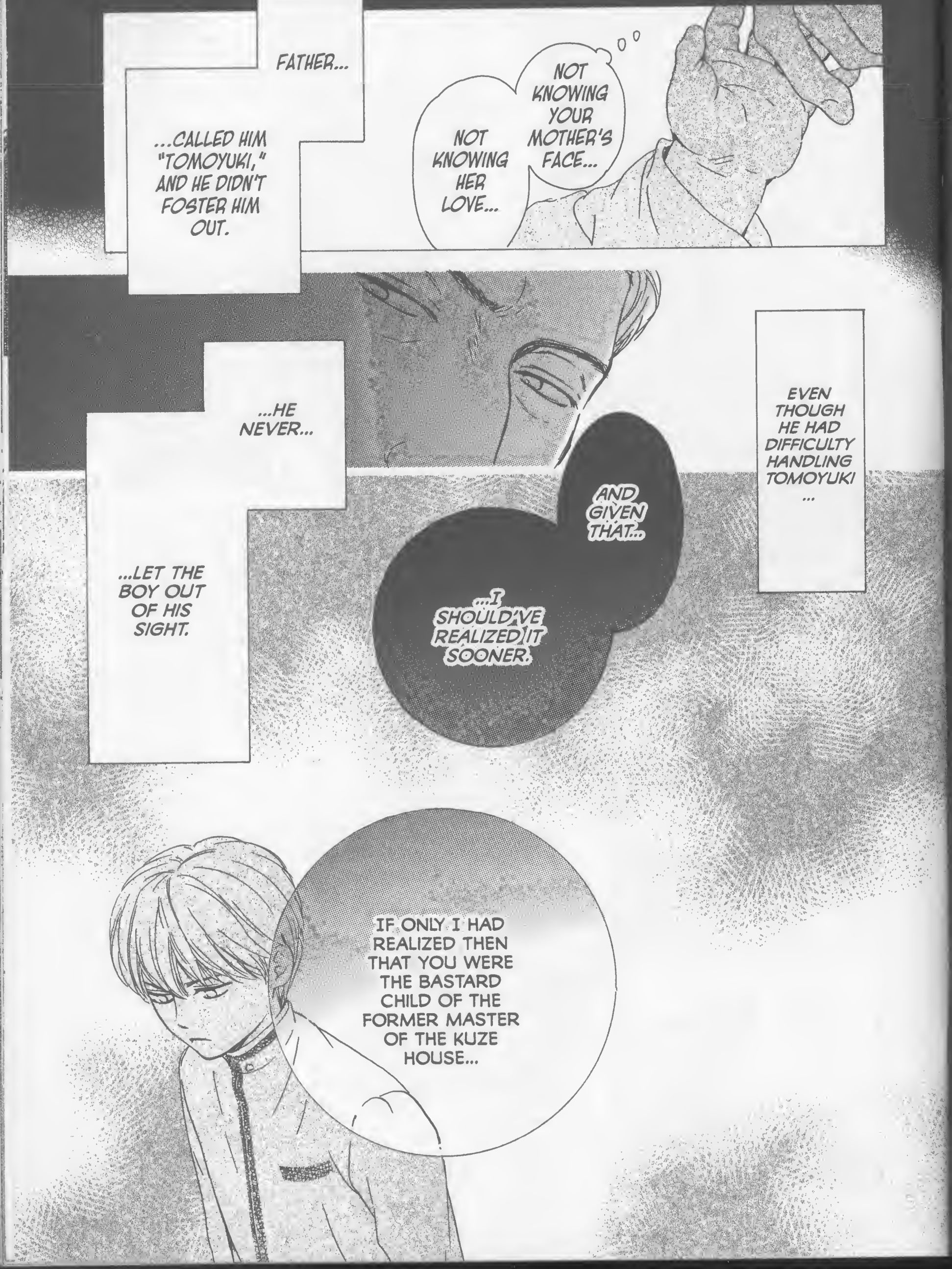

...
TOMO-YUKI.
HIRO-YUKI...
I UNDERSTAND THAT OUR BROTHER, THE CURRENT HEAD OF THIS HOUSE, DESPISES ME.
I UNDERSTAND THE REASON HE DOES...
...AS WELL AS HIS OPPOSITION TO THE KUZE MAIN BRANCH.
I UNDERSTAND ONLY TOO WELL.
NOW THEN...
COULD YOU INTERVENE FOR ME? SAY THAT THERE IS A MATTER I WISH TO DISCUSS IN PRIVATE?

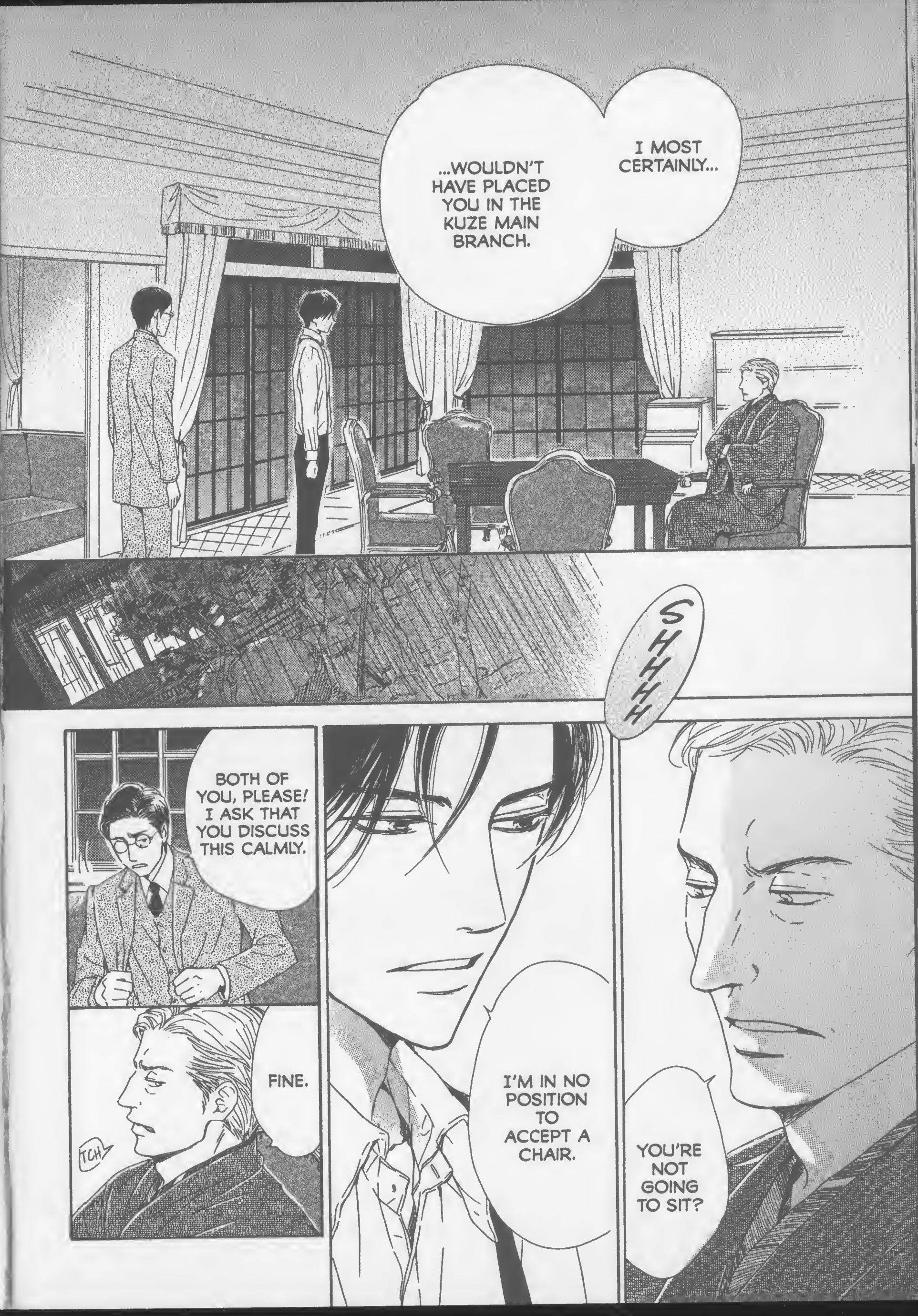

YOU KNOW SOMETHING LIKE THAT IS POINTLESS-
PROMISE ME!
SHF
THE MAN I AM NOW HAS NO IMPROPER ASPIRATIONS. I WON'T DO ANYTHING TO BETRAY THE KUZE FAMILY.
I GIVE YOU MY WORD IN THE NAME OF THE KATSURAGI HOUSE.
?!
COME NOW, TOMO-
I BEG YOU TO INTERVENE.

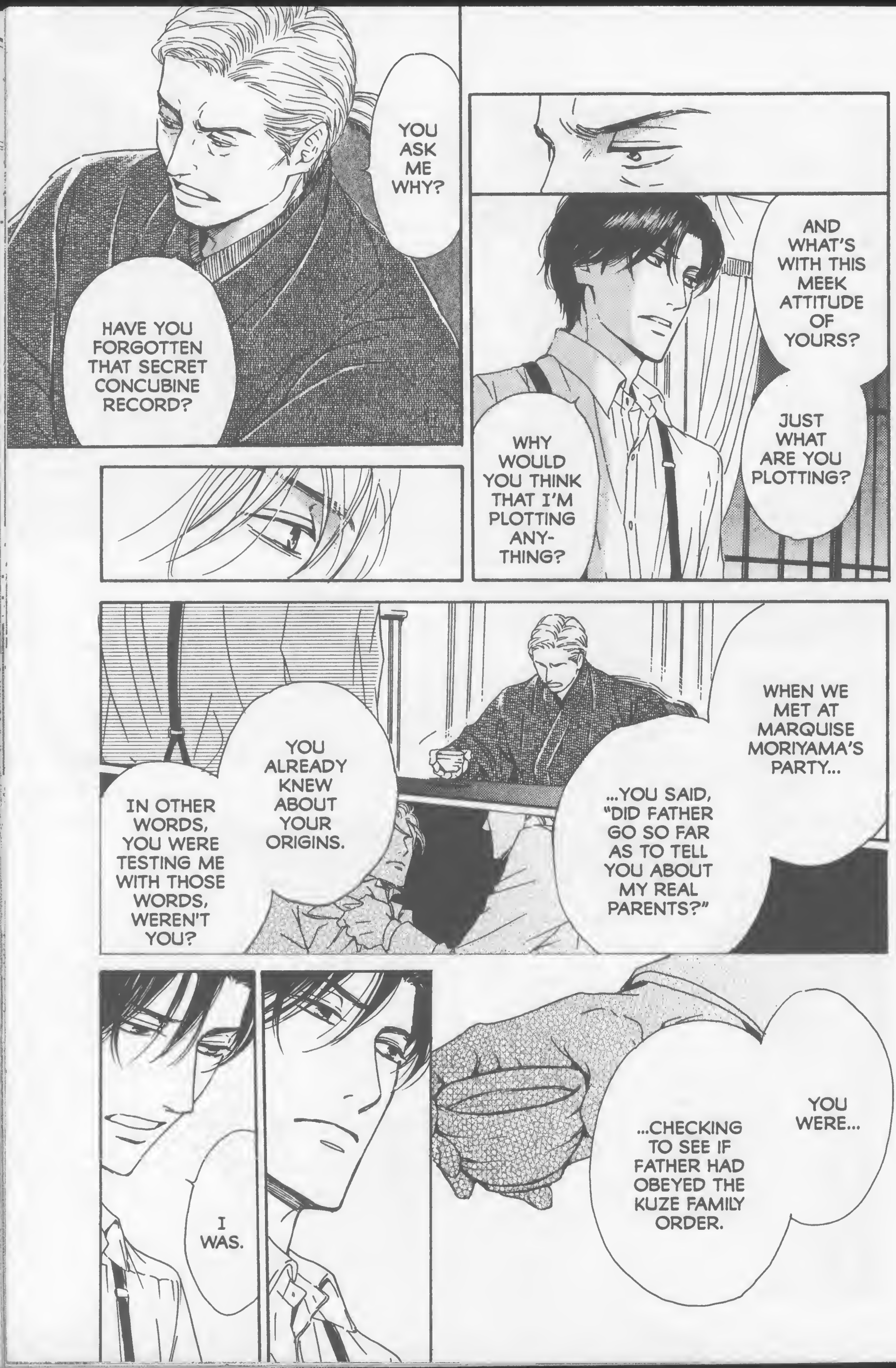

SHHHHH
FATHER.
EXACTLY WHOSE CHILD IS KATSURAGI?

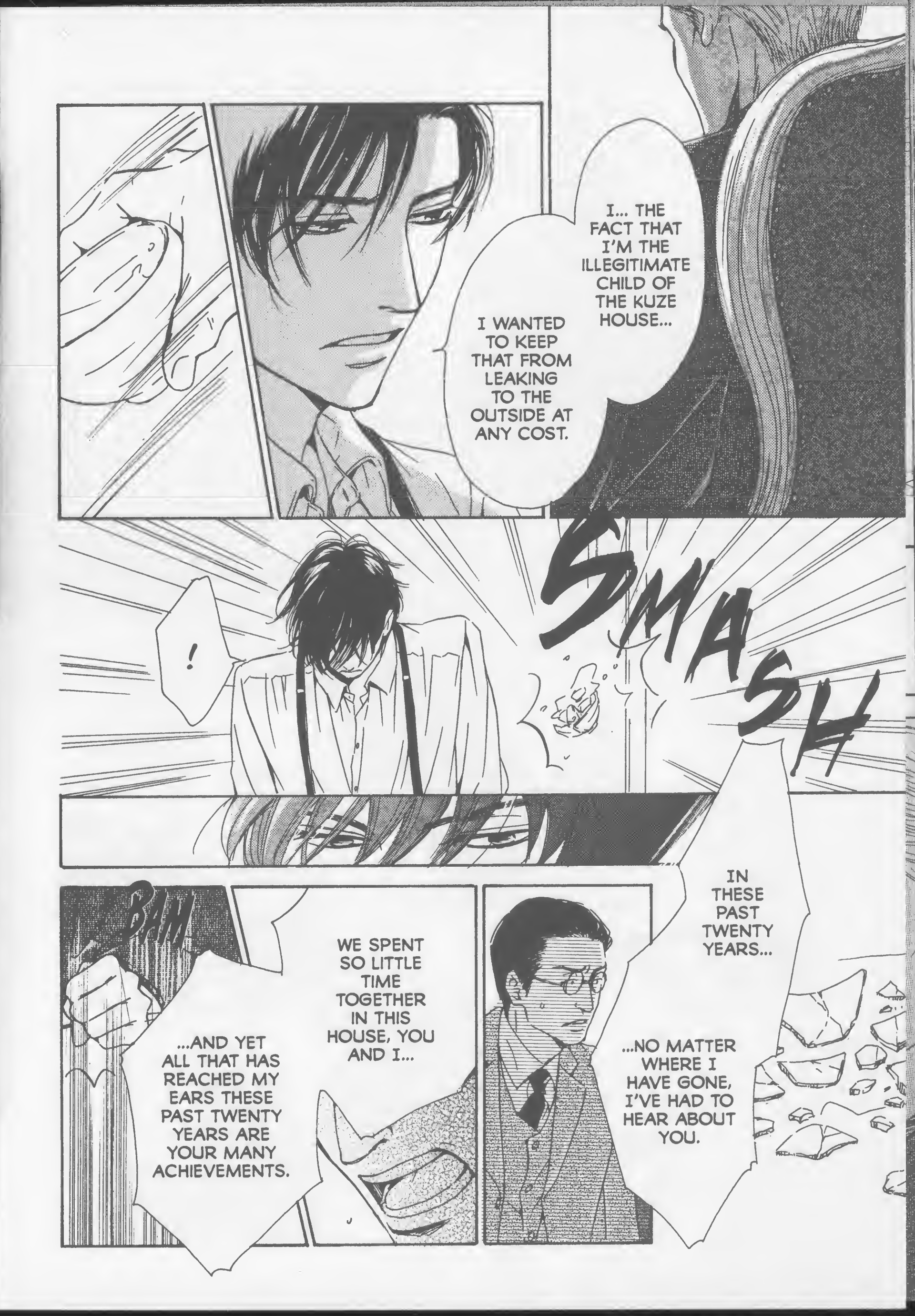

PLEASE TELL ME THE TRUTH!
TOMOYUKI IS...
...NOT EVEN OF YOUR BLOOD, IS HE?
I DO NOT PRETEND TO KNOW WHAT PLAN YOU HAD IN MIND BY TAKING HIM IN.
BUT REGARDLESS, HE IS NOT A MAN OF THE KATSURAGI CLAN!
AND NOW THAT THE MASTER OF THE KUZE HOUSE HAS PASSED...
...WHAT POSSIBLE NEED COULD THERE BE FOR OUR TWO HOUSES TO SO STRICTLY ABIDE BY THAT PROMISE?!
HYOO
HYOO
HYOOO
TAKA... YUKI...
WHEEZE
!
SUCH ARRO-GANCE...
HYOO
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THE DUTY OF THE CHIEF RETAINER?
HYOOO
EVERYTHING THAT THE KATSURAGIS ARE...

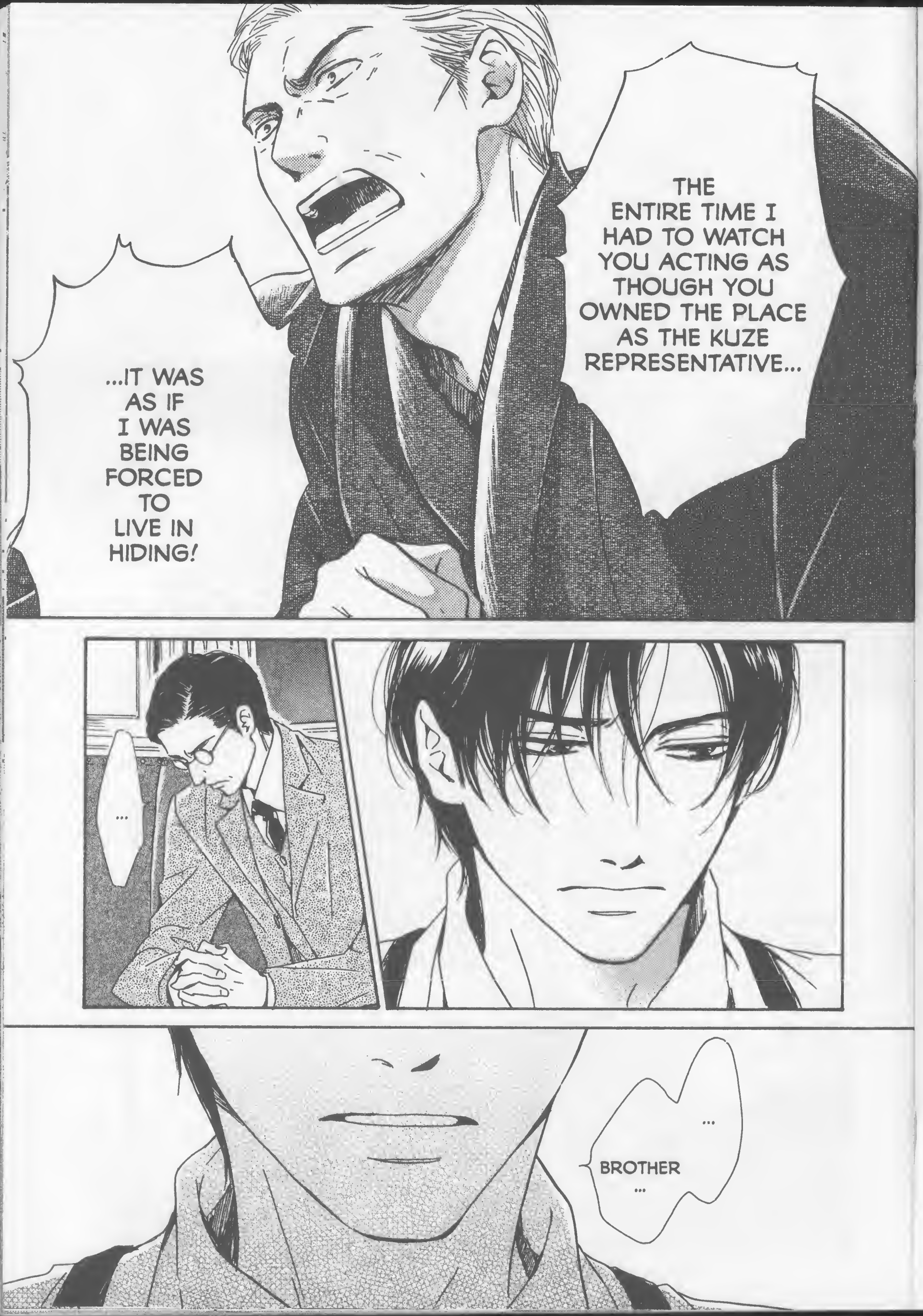

...IS BECAUSE OF...
...THE KUZE HOUSE...
HYOO
WHEEZE
TOMOYUKI.
BECAUSE OF TOMOYUKI...
...MY HANDS ARE TIED.
BECAUSE OF HIM...
THE "BROTHER" WHO APPEARED OUT OF THE BLUE ONE DAY.
...EVERYONE ASSUMED THAT HE WAS A CHILD BEGOTTEN BY MY FATHER WITH HIS MISTRESS.
EVEN IF YOU'RE WITH US KATSURAGIS NOW...
...YOU'RE THE THIRD SON OF A SAMURAI FAMILY. YOU'LL BE SENT OUT SOON ENOUGH AS A FOSTER CHILD.

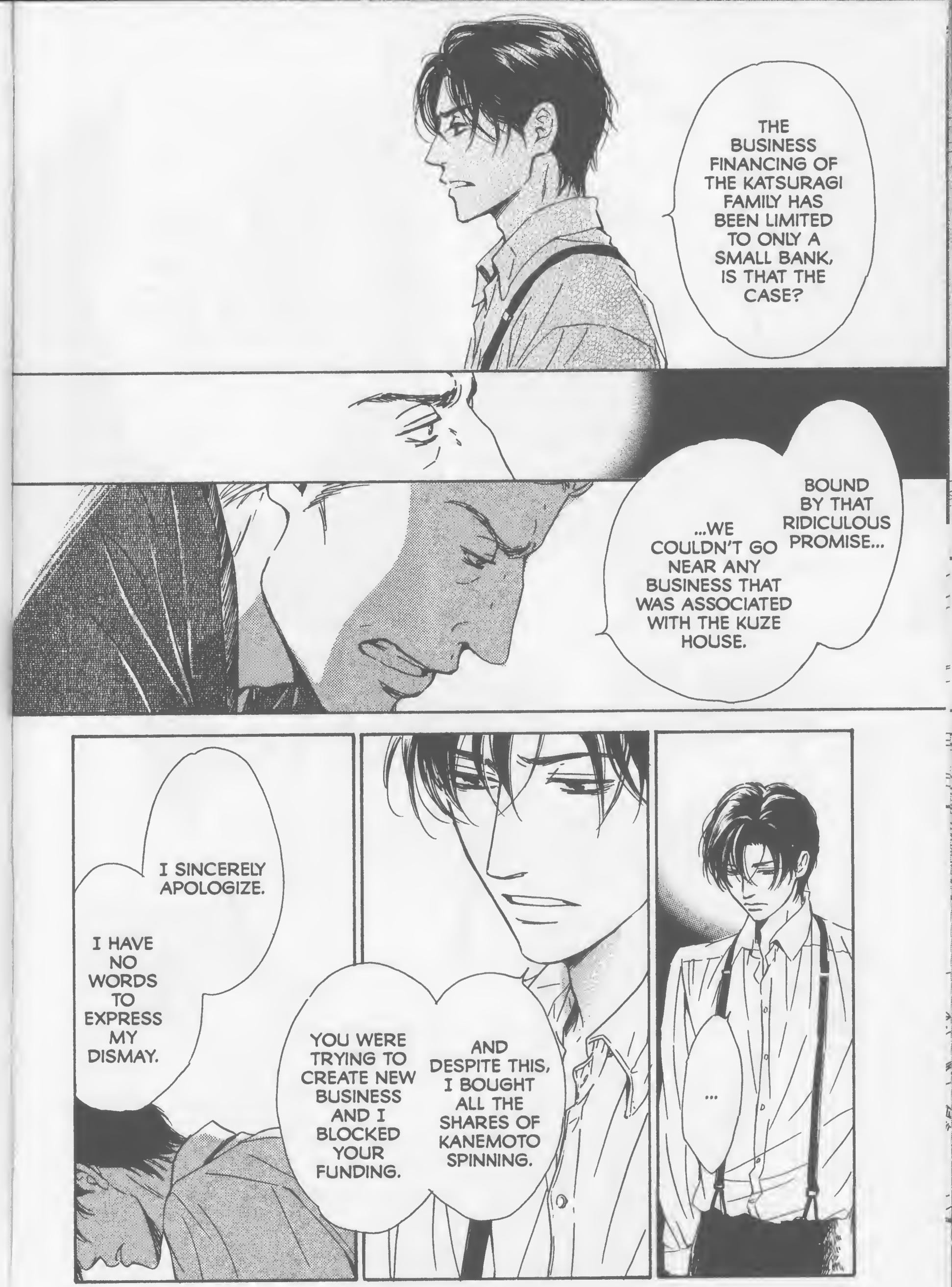

FATHER...
...CALLED HIM "TOMOYUKI," AND HE DIDN'T FOSTER HIM OUT.
NOT KNOWING YOUR MOTHER'S FACE...
NOT KNOWING HER LOVE...
EVEN THOUGH HE HAD DIFFICULTY HANDLING TOMOYUKI...
...HE NEVER...
...LET THE BOY OUT OF HIS SIGHT.
AND GIVEN THAT...
...I SHOULD'VE REALIZED IT SOONER.
IF ONLY I HAD REALIZED THEN THAT YOU WERE THE BASTARD CHILD OF THE FORMER MASTER OF THE KUZE HOUSE...

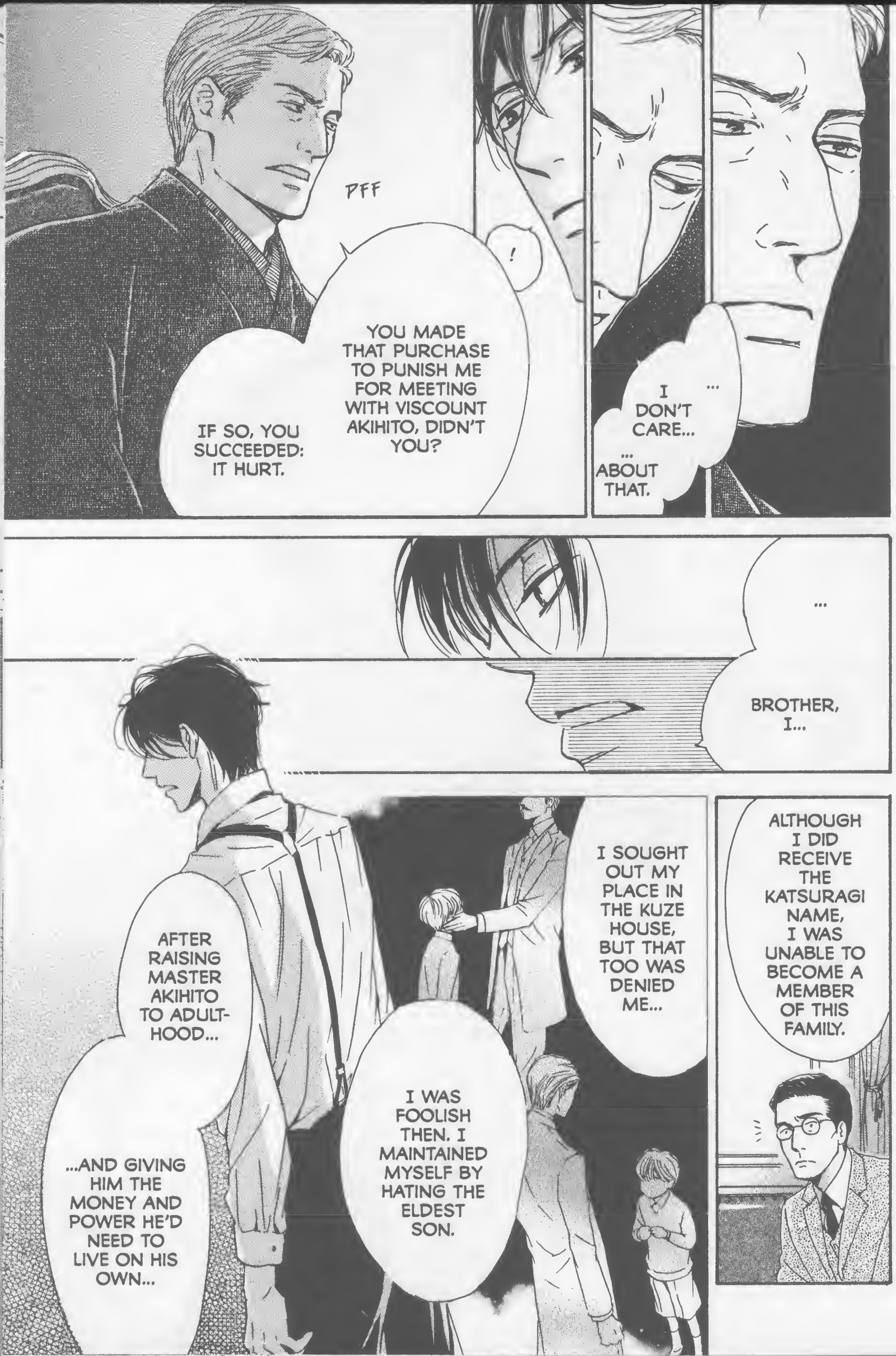

I MOST CERTAINLY...
...WOULDN'T HAVE PLACED YOU IN THE KUZE MAIN BRANCH.
SHHHH
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO SIT?
I'M IN NO POSITION TO ACCEPT A CHAIR.
BOTH OF YOU, PLEASE! I ASK THAT YOU DISCUSS THIS CALMLY.
FINE.
TCH

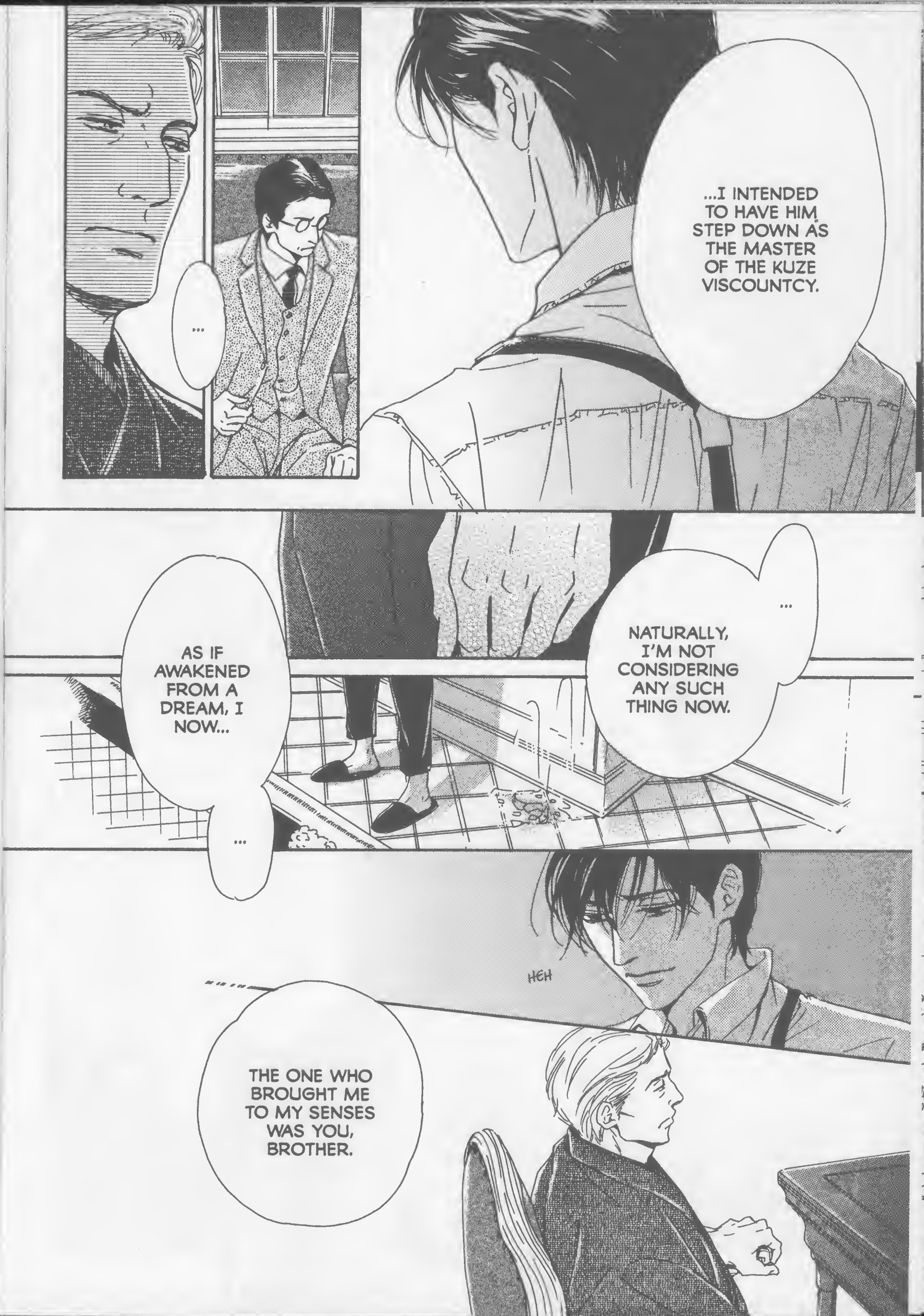

AND WHAT'S WITH THIS MEEK ATTITUDE OF YOURS?
JUST WHAT ARE YOU PLOTTING?
WHY WOULD YOU THINK THAT I'M PLOTTING ANYTHING?
YOU ASK ME WHY?
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THAT SECRET CONCUBINE RECORD?
WHEN WE MET AT MARQUISE MORIYAMA'S PARTY...
...YOU SAID, "DID FATHER GO SO FAR AS TO TELL YOU ABOUT MY REAL PARENTS?"
YOU ALREADY KNEW ABOUT YOUR ORIGINS.
IN OTHER WORDS, YOU WERE TESTING ME WITH THOSE WORDS, WEREN'T YOU?
YOU WERE...
...CHECKING TO SEE IF FATHER HAD OBEYED THE KUZE FAMILY ORDER.
I WAS.

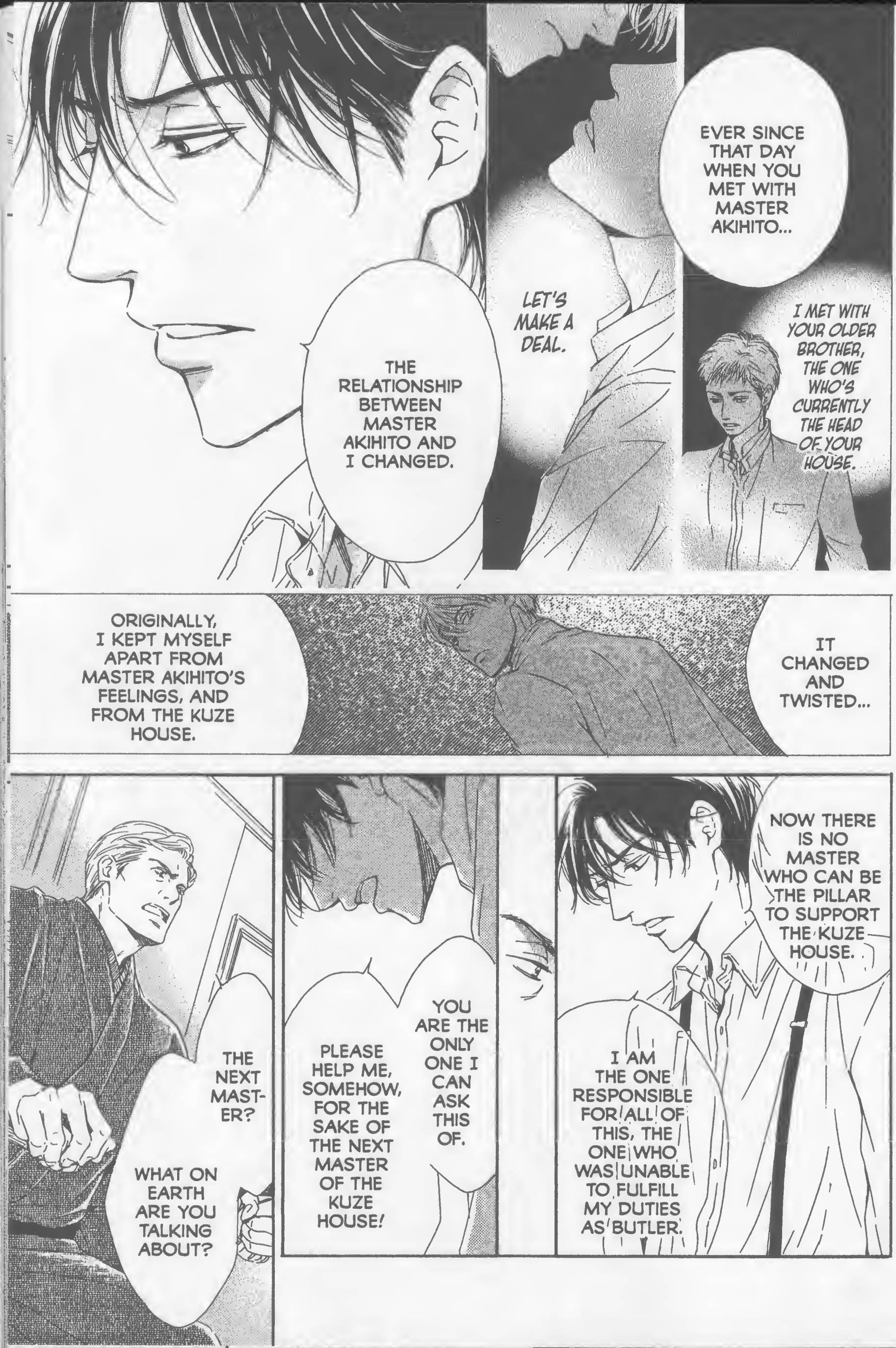

I... THE FACT THAT I'M THE ILLEGITIMATE CHILD OF THE KUZE HOUSE...
I WANTED TO KEEP THAT FROM LEAKING TO THE OUTSIDE AT ANY COST.
SMASH
!
IN THESE PAST TWENTY YEARS...
...NO MATTER WHERE I HAVE GONE, I'VE HAD TO HEAR ABOUT YOU.
BAM
WE SPENT SO LITTLE TIME TOGETHER IN THIS HOUSE, YOU AND I...
...AND YET ALL THAT HAS REACHED MY EARS THESE PAST TWENTY YEARS ARE YOUR MANY ACHIEVEMENTS.

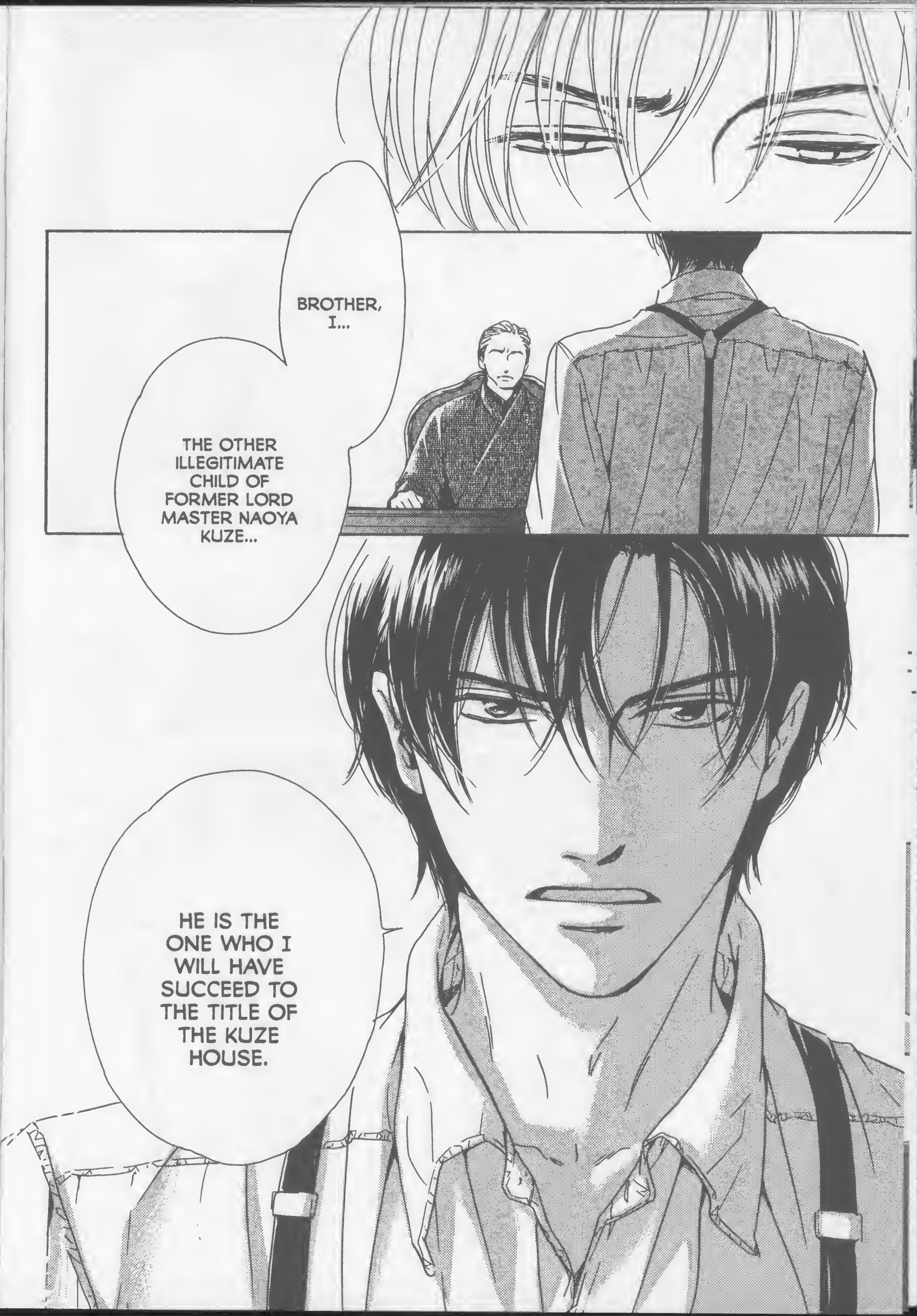

THE ENTIRE TIME I HAD TO WATCH YOU ACTING AS THOUGH YOU OWNED THE PLACE AS THE KUZE REPRESENTATIVE...
...IT WAS AS IF I WAS BEING FORCED TO LIVE IN HIDING!
...
...
BROTHER ...

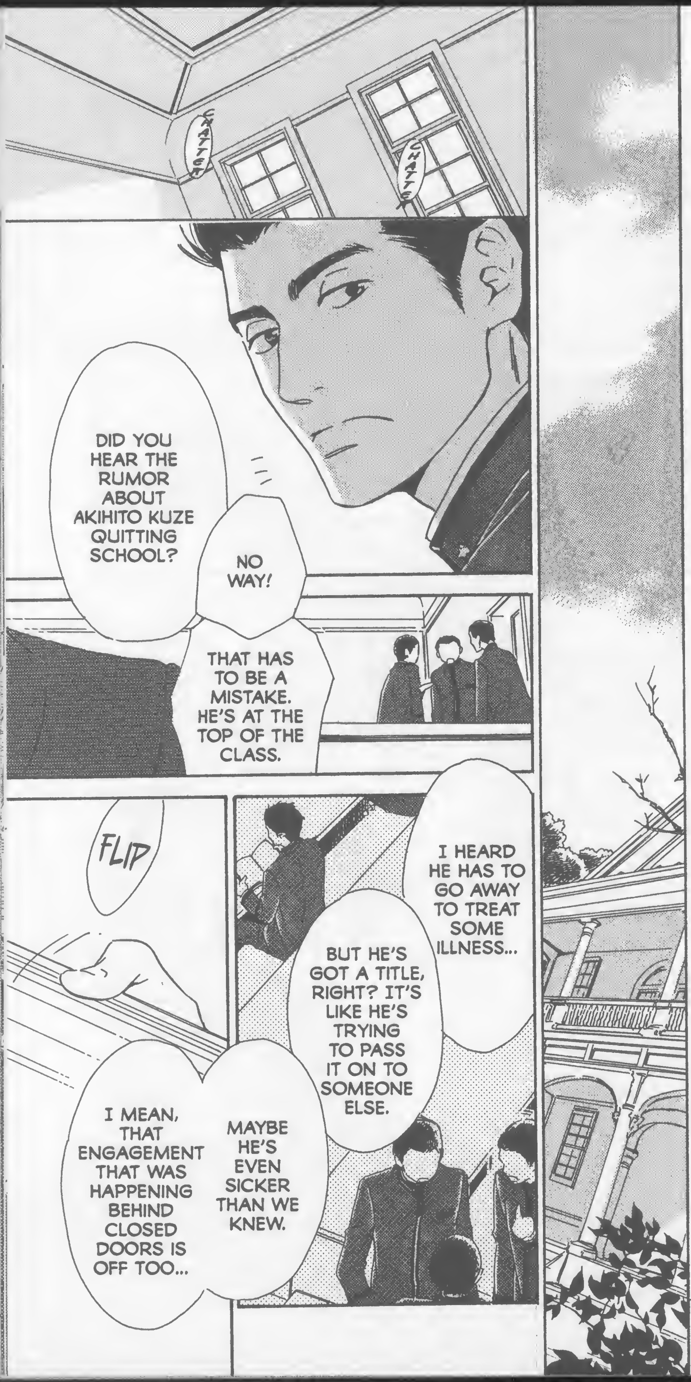

THE BUSINESS FINANCING OF THE KATSURAGI FAMILY HAS BEEN LIMITED TO ONLY A SMALL BANK, IS THAT THE CASE?
BOUND BY THAT RIDICULOUS PROMISE...
...WE COULDN'T GO NEAR ANY BUSINESS THAT WAS ASSOCIATED WITH THE KUZE HOUSE.
...
AND DESPITE THIS, I BOUGHT ALL THE SHARES OF KANEMOTO SPINNING.
YOU WERE TRYING TO CREATE NEW BUSINESS AND I BLOCKED YOUR FUNDING.
I SINCERELY APOLOGIZE.
I HAVE NO WORDS TO EXPRESS MY DISMAY.

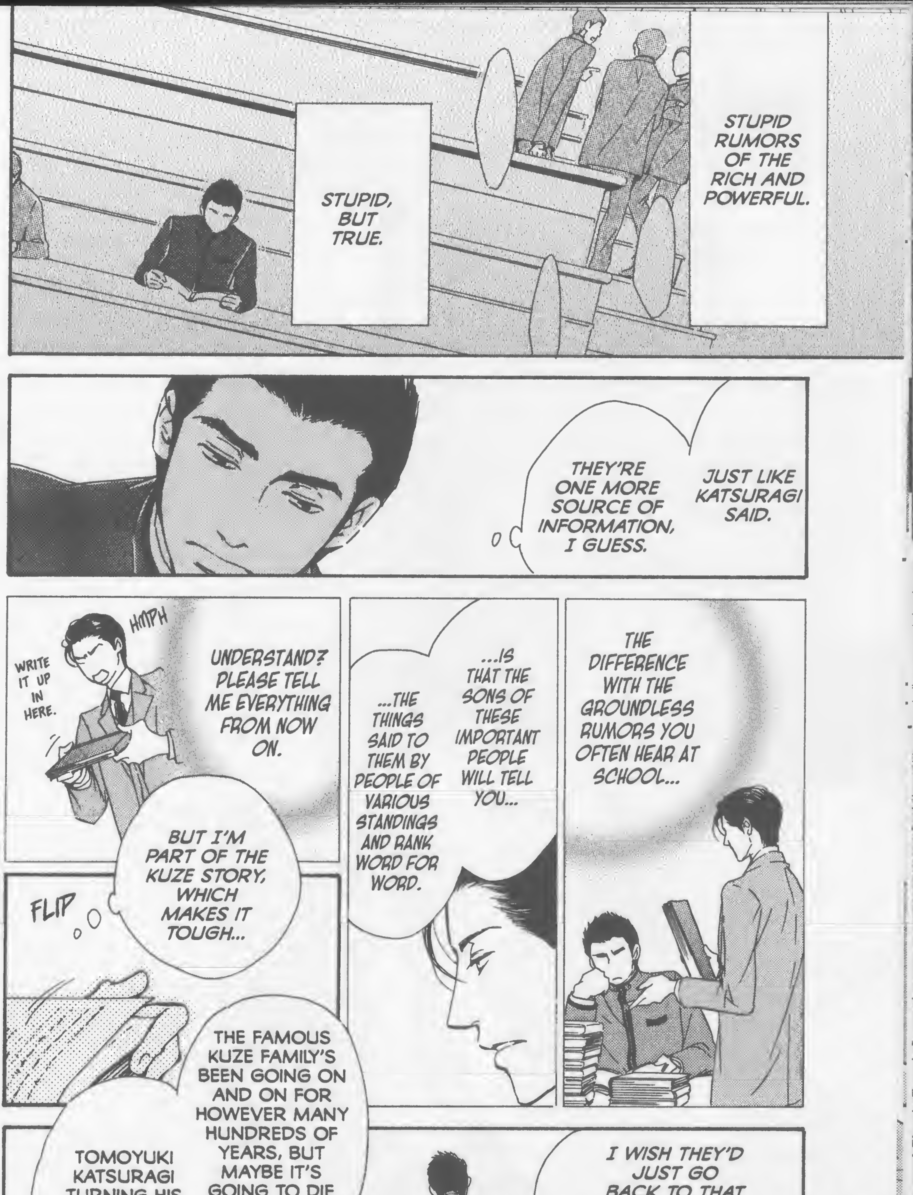

I DON'T CARE...
...
...ABOUT THAT.
!
PFF
YOU MADE THAT PURCHASE TO PUNISH ME FOR MEETING WITH VISCOUNT AKIHITO, DIDN'T YOU?
IF SO, YOU SUCCEEDED: IT HURT.
...
BROTHER, I...
ALTHOUGH I DID RECEIVE THE KATSURAGI NAME, I WAS UNABLE TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THIS FAMILY.
I SOUGHT OUT MY PLACE IN THE KUZE HOUSE, BUT THAT TOO WAS DENIED ME...
I WAS FOOLISH THEN. I MAINTAINED MYSELF BY HATING THE ELDEST SON.
AFTER RAISING MASTER AKIHITO TO ADULTHOOD...
...AND GIVING HIM THE MONEY AND POWER HE'D NEED TO LIVE ON HIS OWN...

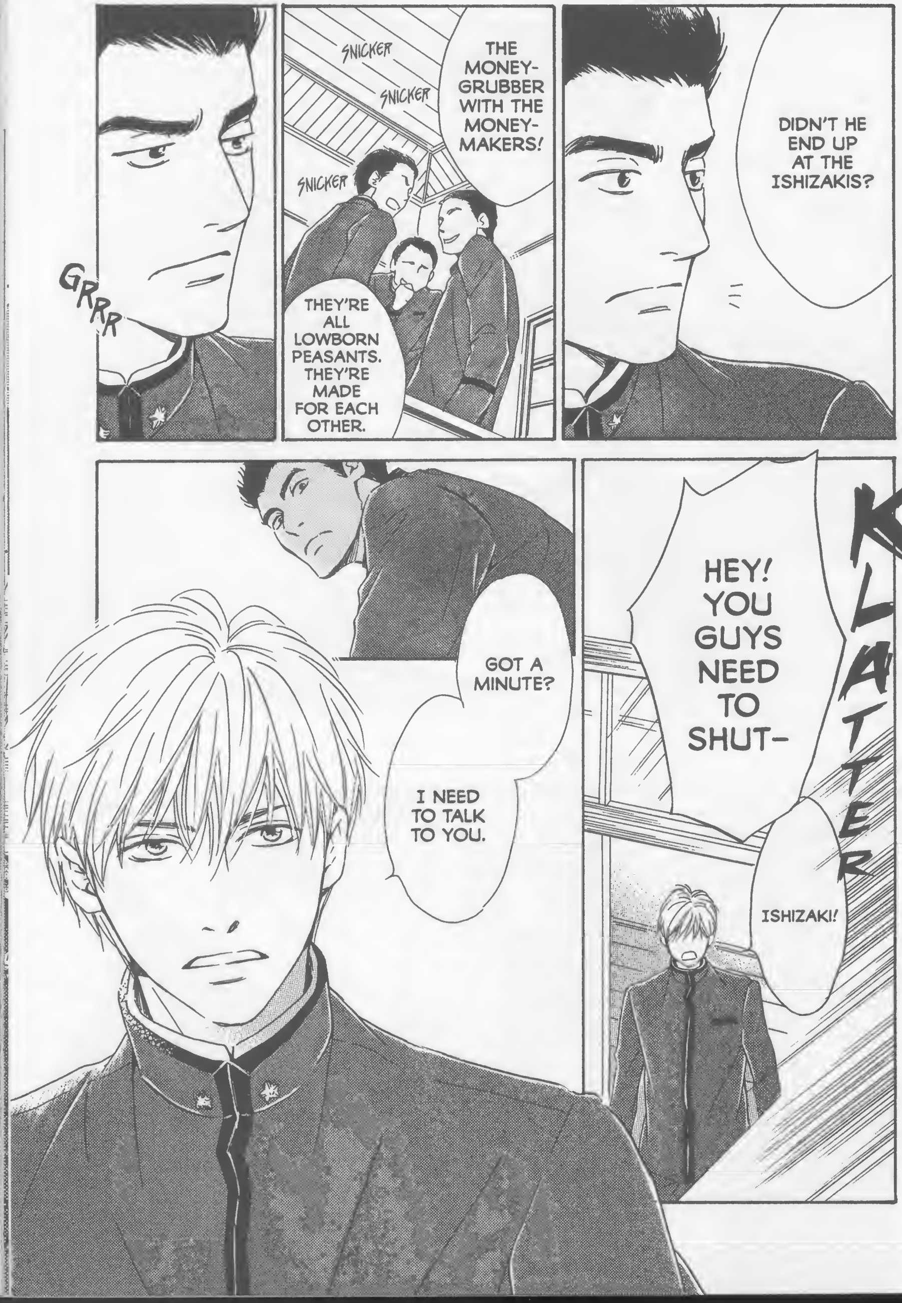

...I INTENDED TO HAVE HIM STEP DOWN AS THE MASTER OF THE KUZE VISCOUNTCY.
...
...
NATURALLY, I'M NOT CONSIDERING ANY SUCH THING NOW.
AS IF AWAKENED FROM A DREAM, I NOW...
...
HEH
THE ONE WHO BROUGHT ME TO MY SENSES WAS YOU, BROTHER.

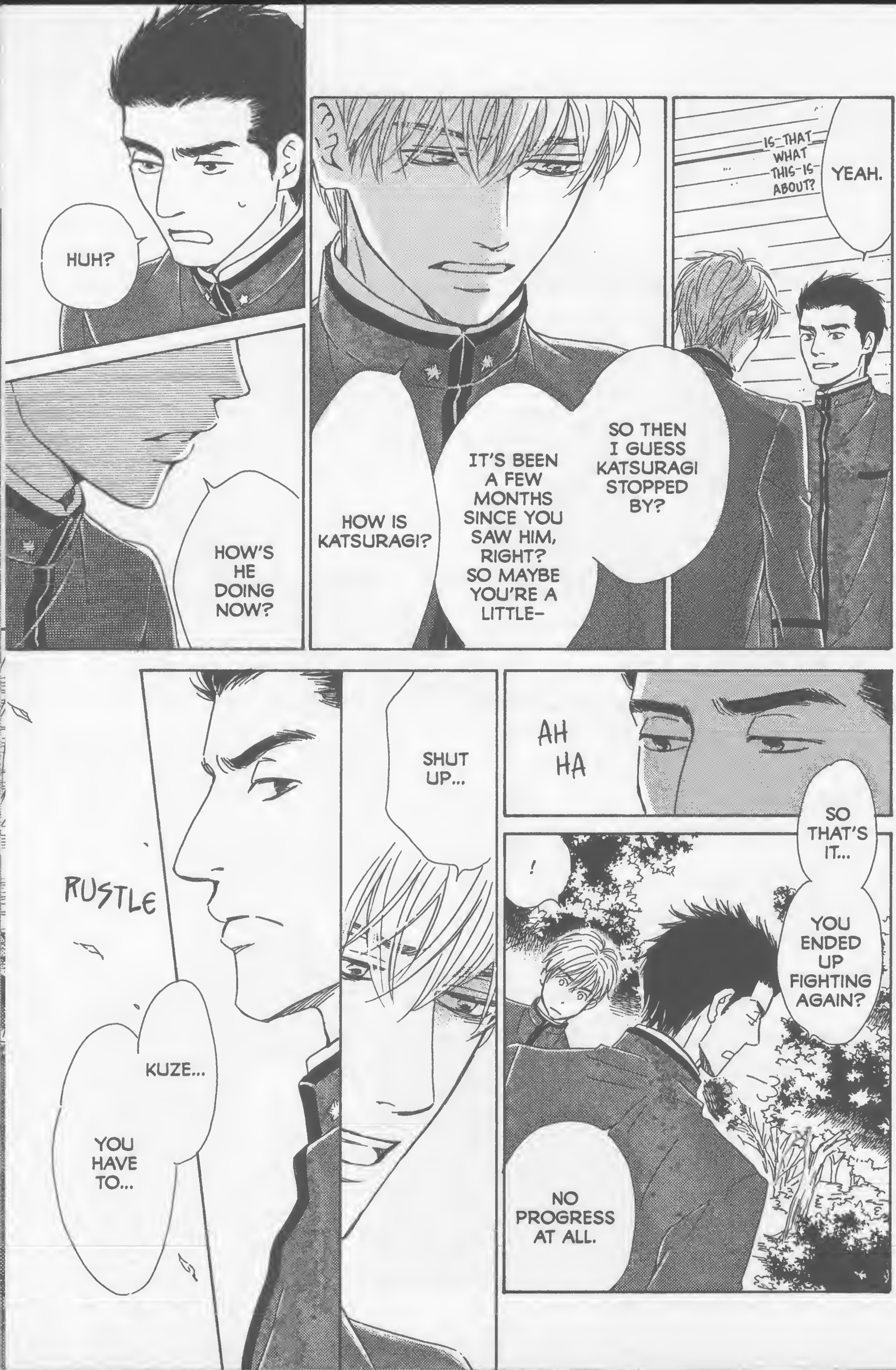

EVER SINCE THAT DAY WHEN YOU MET WITH MASTER AKIHITO...
I MET WITH YOUR OLDER BROTHER, THE ONE WHO'S CURRENTLY THE HEAD OF YOUR HOUSE.
LET'S MAKE A DEAL.
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MASTER AKIHITO AND I CHANGED.
IT CHANGED AND TWISTED...
ORIGINALLY, I KEPT MYSELF APART FROM MASTER AKIHITO'S FEELINGS, AND FROM THE KUZE HOUSE.
NOW THERE IS NO MASTER WHO CAN BE THE PILLAR TO SUPPORT THE KUZE HOUSE.
I AM THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL OF THIS, THE ONE WHO WAS UNABLE TO FULFILL MY DUTIES AS BUTLER.
YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE I CAN ASK THIS OF.
PLEASE HELP ME, SOMEHOW, FOR THE SAKE OF THE NEXT MASTER OF THE KUZE HOUSE!
THE NEXT MASTER?
WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

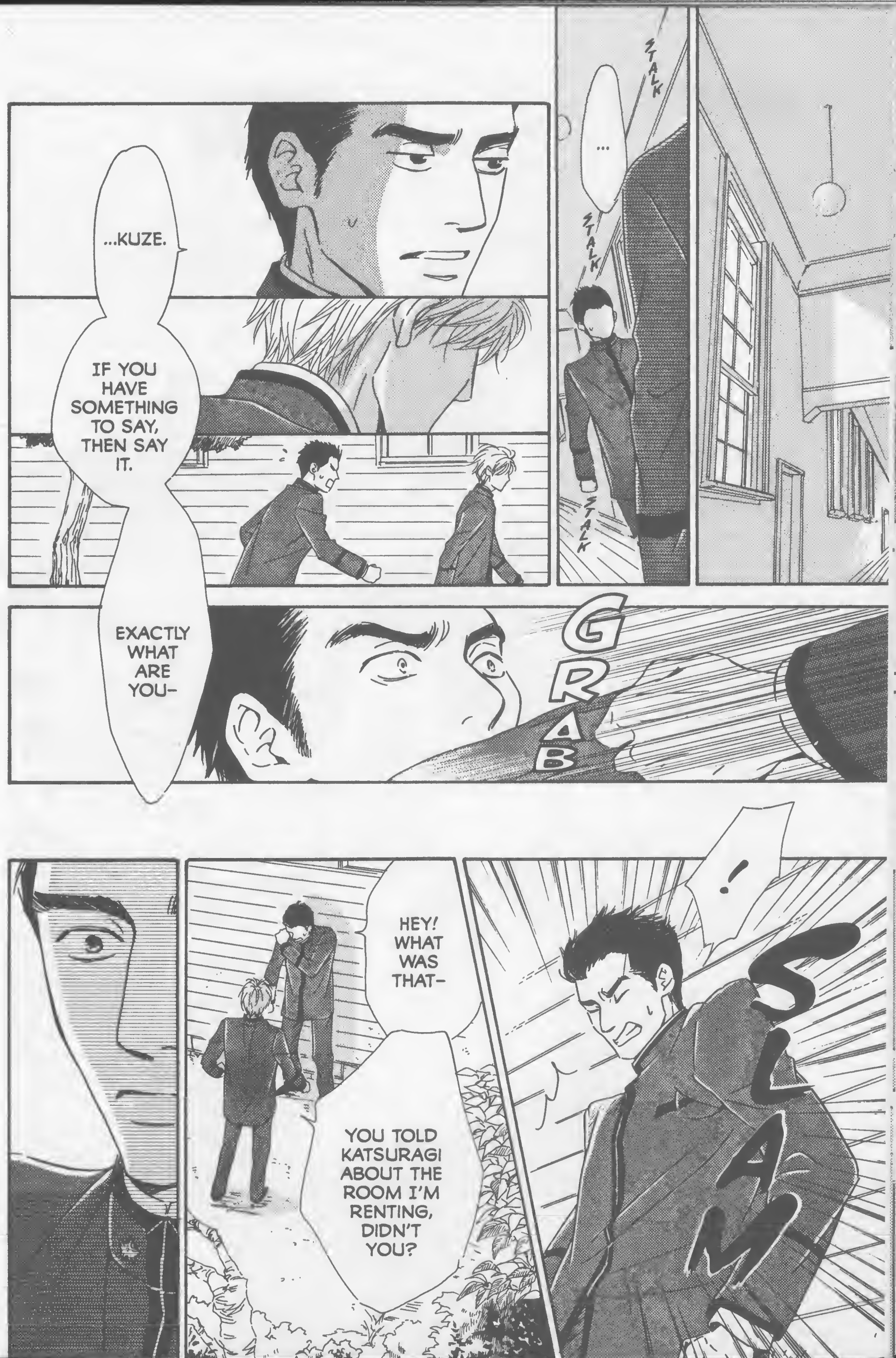

BROTHER, I...
THE OTHER ILLEGITIMATE CHILD OF FORMER LORD MASTER NAOYA KUZE...
HE IS THE ONE WHO I WILL HAVE SUCCEED TO THE TITLE OF THE KUZE HOUSE.

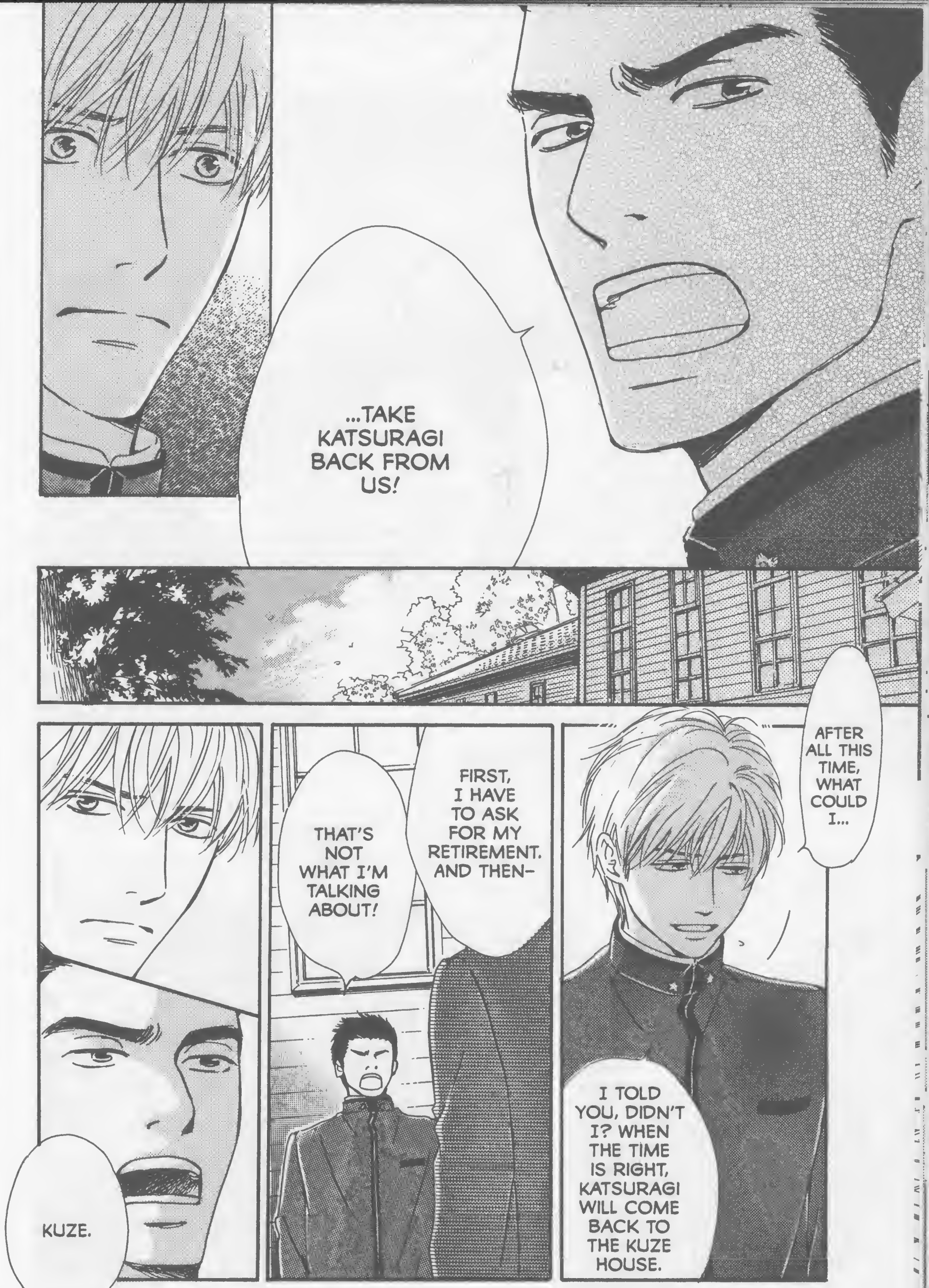

CHATTER
CHATTER
DID YOU HEAR THE RUMOR ABOUT AKIHITO KUZE QUITTING SCHOOL?
NO WAY!
THAT HAS TO BE A MISTAKE. HE'S AT THE TOP OF THE CLASS.
I HEARD HE HAS TO GO AWAY TO TREAT SOME ILLNESS...
BUT HE'S GOT A TITLE, RIGHT? IT'S LIKE HE'S TRYING TO PASS IT ON TO SOMEONE ELSE.
FLIP
MAYBE HE'S EVEN SICKER THAN WE KNEW.
I MEAN, THAT ENGAGEMENT THAT WAS HAPPENING BEHIND CLOSED DOORS IS OFF TOO...

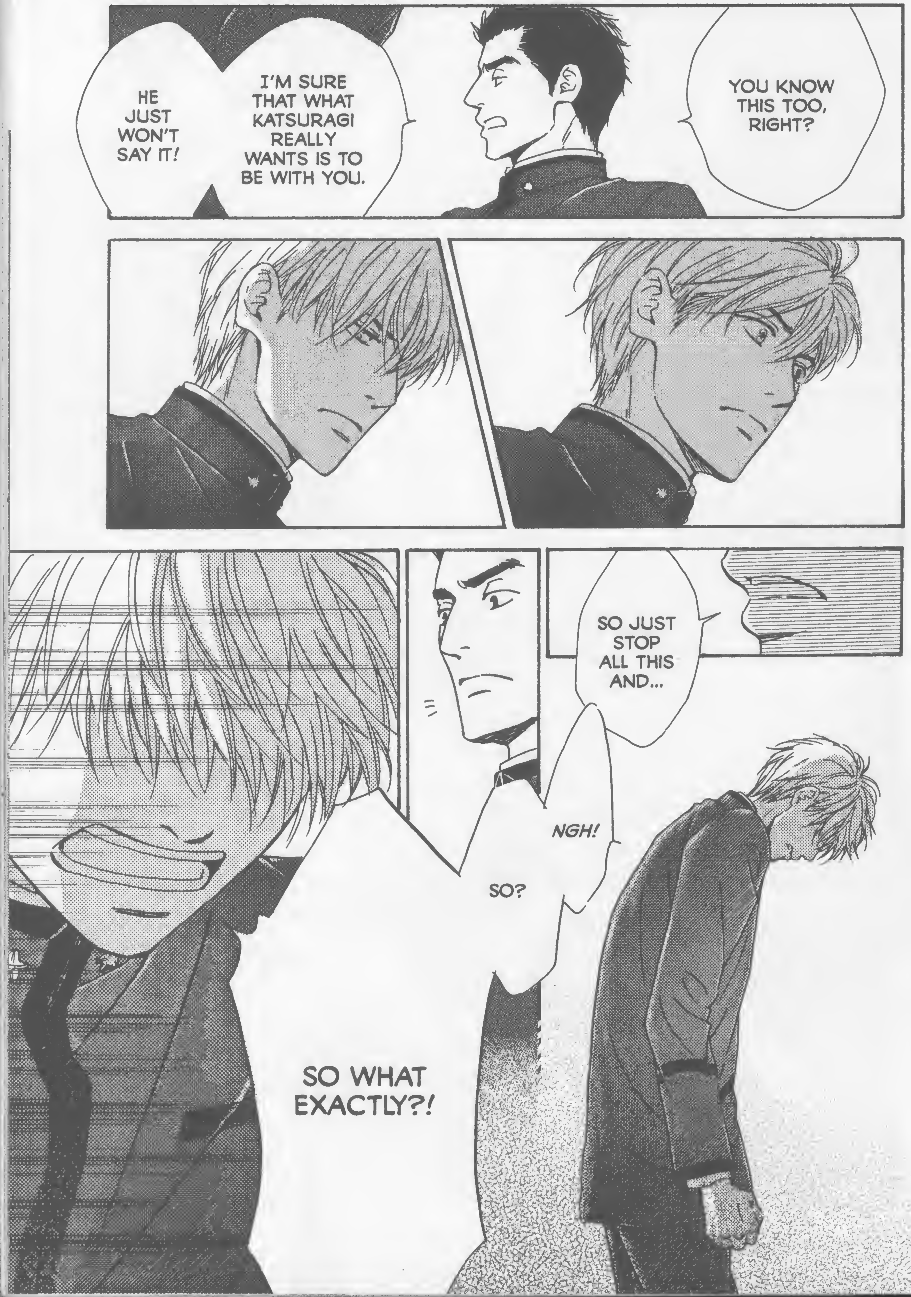

STUPID RUMORS OF THE RICH AND POWERFUL.
STUPID, BUT TRUE.
JUST LIKE KATSURAGI SAID.
THEY'RE ONE MORE SOURCE OF INFORMATION, I GUESS.
THE DIFFERENCE WITH THE GROUNDLESS RUMORS YOU OFTEN HEAR AT SCHOOL...
...IS THAT THE SONS OF THESE IMPORTANT PEOPLE WILL TELL YOU...
...THE THINGS SAID TO THEM BY PEOPLE OF VARIOUS STANDINGS AND RANK WORD FOR WORD.
UNDERSTAND? PLEASE TELL ME EVERYTHING FROM NOW ON.
HMPH
WRITE IT UP IN HERE.
BUT I'M PART OF THE KUZE STORY, WHICH MAKES IT TOUGH...
FLIP
I WISH THEY'D JUST GO BACK TO THAT CONVERSATION ABOUT COUNT SAKURA THEY WERE SO INTO EARLIER.
THE FAMOUS KUZE FAMILY'S BEEN GOING ON AND ON FOR HOWEVER MANY HUNDREDS OF YEARS, BUT MAYBE IT'S GOING TO DIE OUT WITH HIS GENERATION.
TOMOYUKI KATSURAGI TURNING HIS BACK ON THE HOUSE IS PROOF OF THAT.

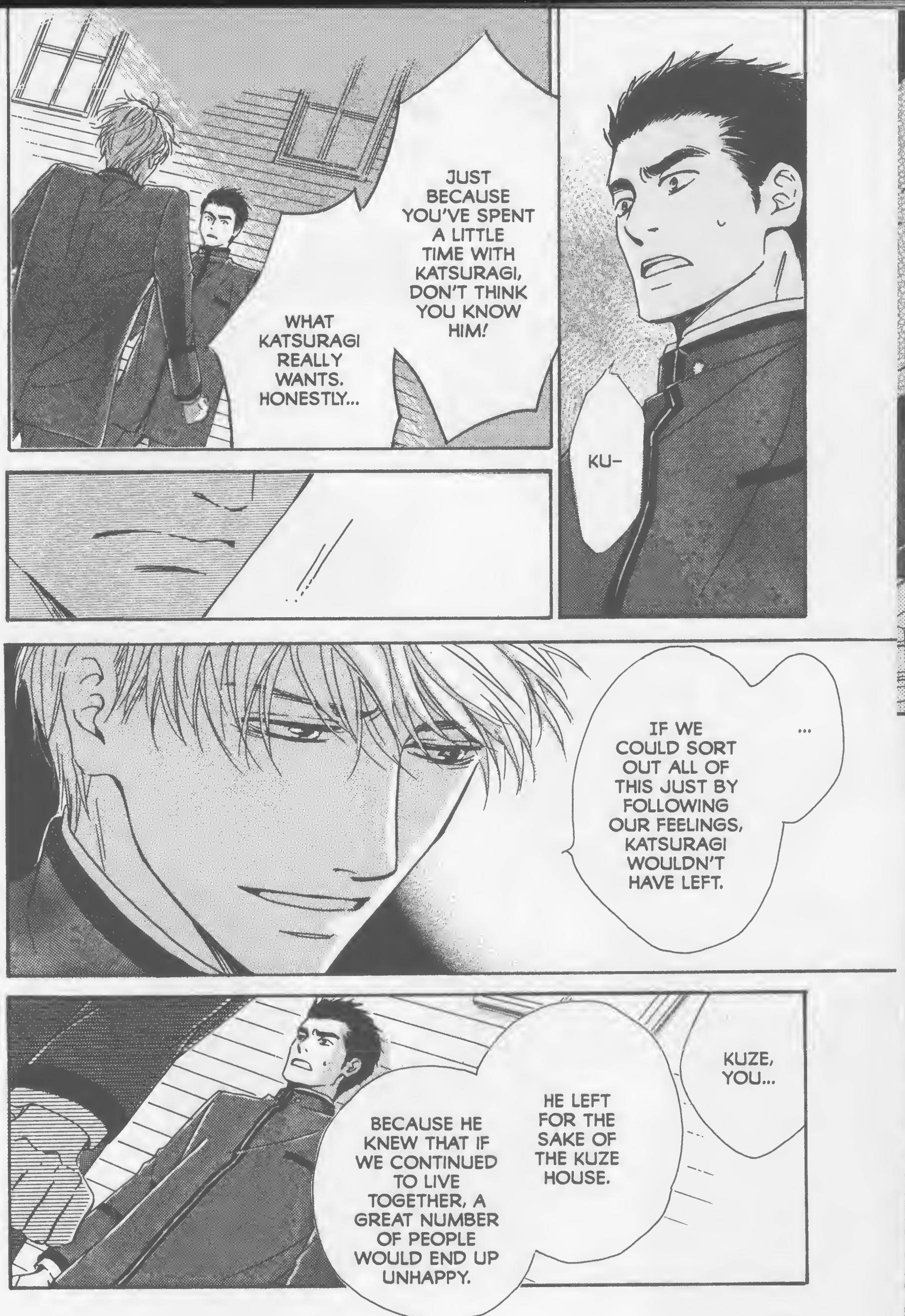

DIDN'T HE END UP AT THE ISHIZAKIS?
THE MONEY-GRUBBER WITH THE MONEY-MAKERS!
SNICKER
SNICKER
SNICKER
THEY'RE ALL LOWBORN PEASANTS. THEY'RE MADE FOR EACH OTHER.
GRRR
KLATTER
HEY! YOU GUYS NEED TO SHUT-
ISHIZAKI!
GOT A MINUTE?
I NEED TO TALK TO YOU.

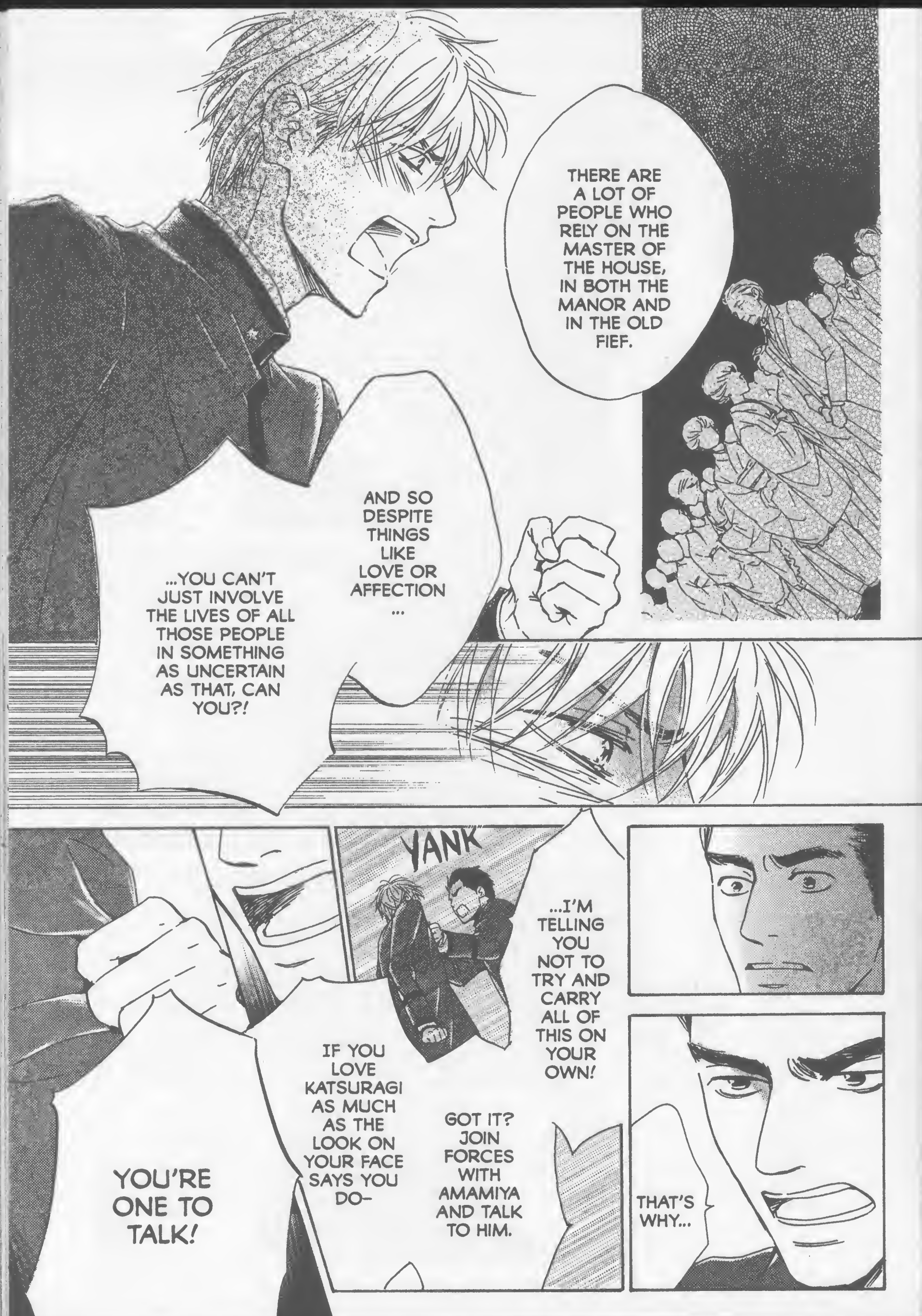

IS THAT WHAT THIS IS ABOUT?
...
YEAH.
SO THEN I GUESS KATSURAGI STOPPED BY?
IT'S BEEN A FEW MONTHS SINCE YOU SAW HIM, RIGHT? SO MAYBE YOU'RE A LITTLE-
HOW IS KATSURAGI?
HUH?
HOW'S HE DOING NOW?
AH HA
SO THAT'S IT...
YOU ENDED UP FIGHTING AGAIN?
!
NO PROGRESS AT ALL.
SHUT UP...
RUSTLE
KUZE...
YOU HAVE TO...

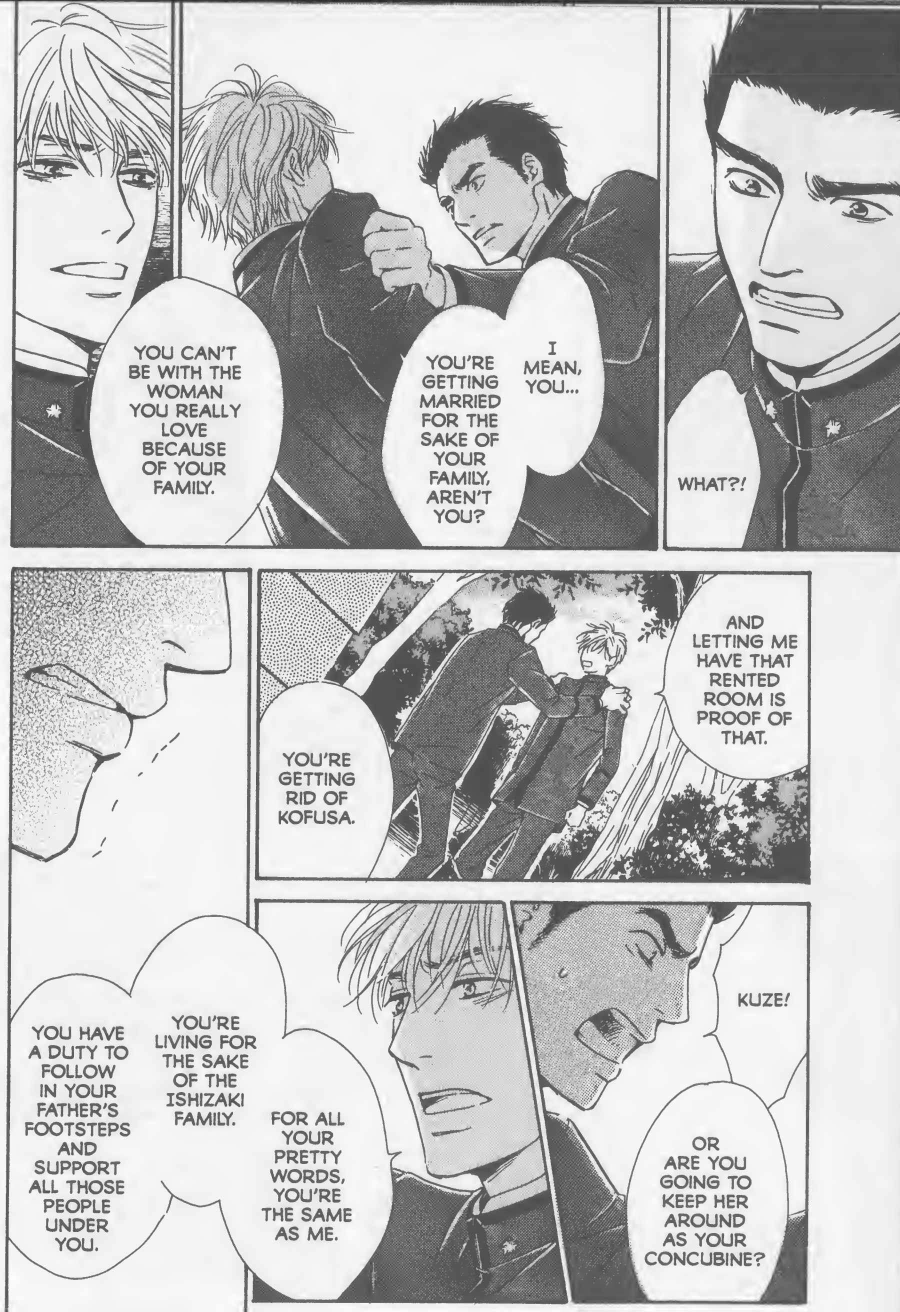

STALK
...
STALK
STALK
...KUZE.
IF YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY, THEN SAY IT.
EXACTLY WHAT ARE YOU-
GRAB
!
SLAM
HEY! WHAT WAS THAT-
YOU TOLD KATSURAGI ABOUT THE ROOM I'M RENTING, DIDN'T YOU?

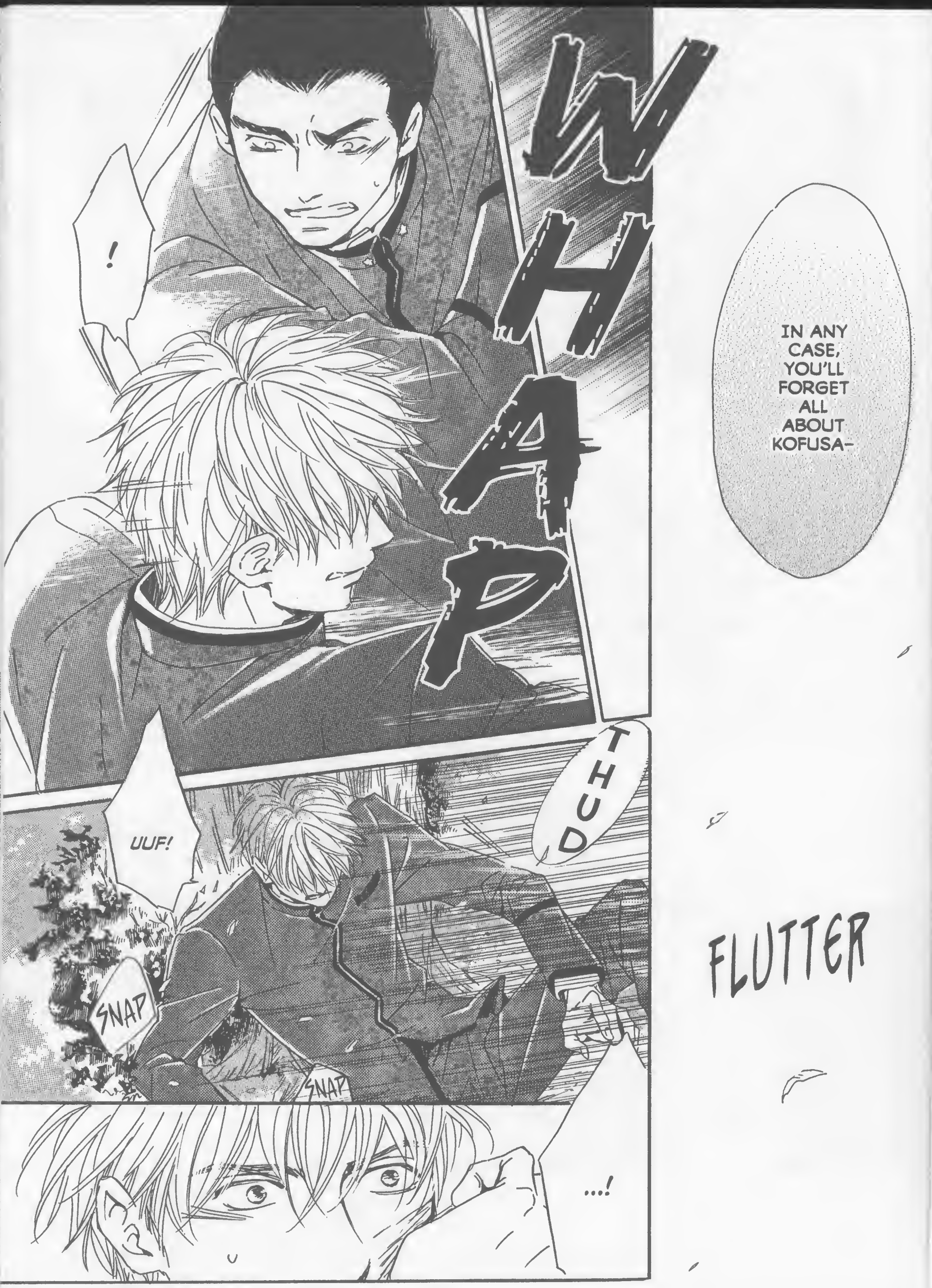

...TAKE KATSURAGI BACK FROM US!
AFTER ALL THIS TIME, WHAT COULD I...
I TOLD YOU, DIDN'T I? WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT, KATSURAGI WILL COME BACK TO THE KUZE HOUSE.
FIRST, I HAVE TO ASK FOR MY RETIREMENT. AND THEN—
THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT!
KUZE.

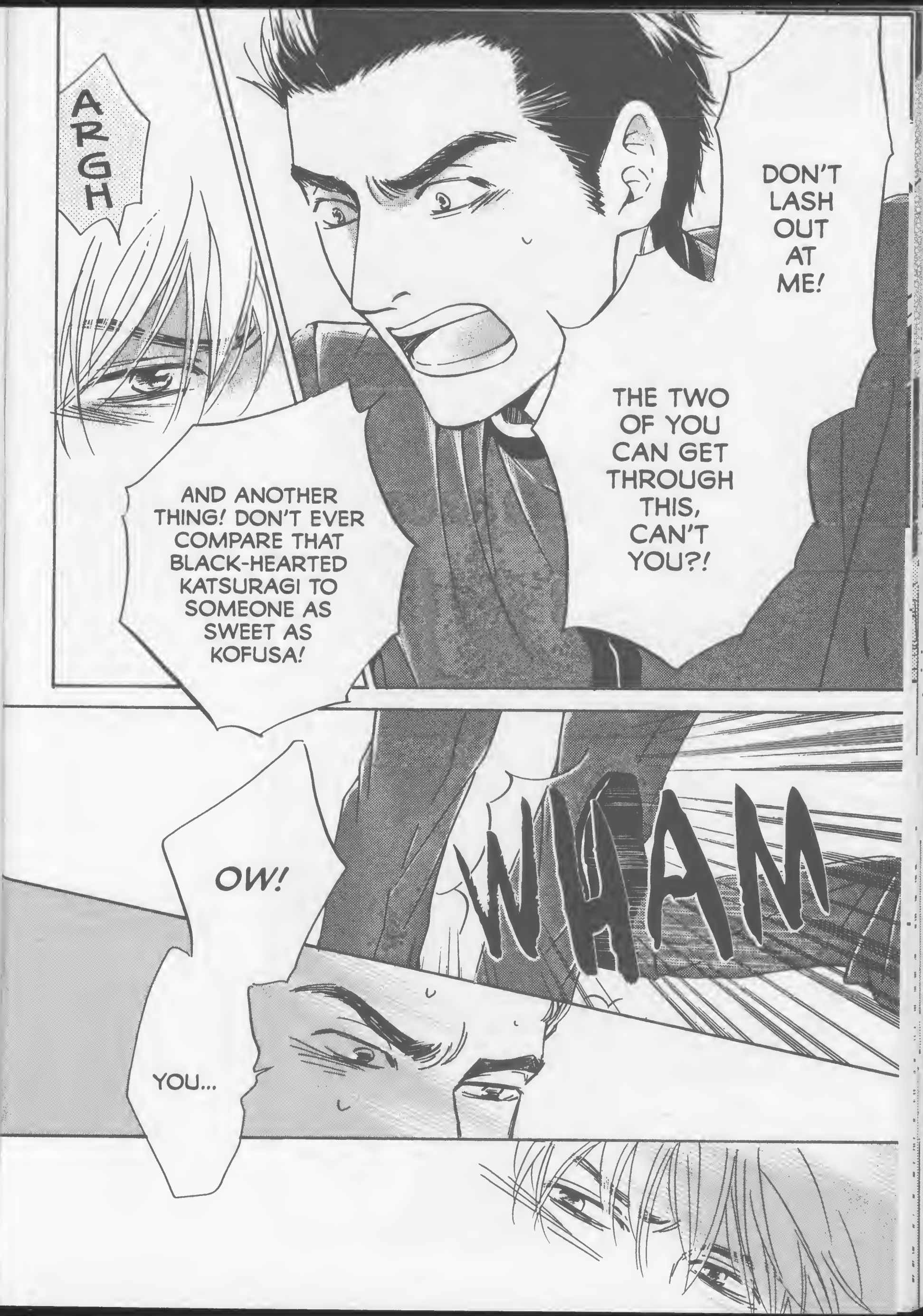

YOU KNOW THIS TOO, RIGHT?
I'M SURE THAT WHAT KATSURAGI REALLY WANTS IS TO BE WITH YOU.
HE JUST WON'T SAY IT!
SO JUST STOP ALL THIS AND...
NGH!
SO?
SO WHAT EXACTLY?!

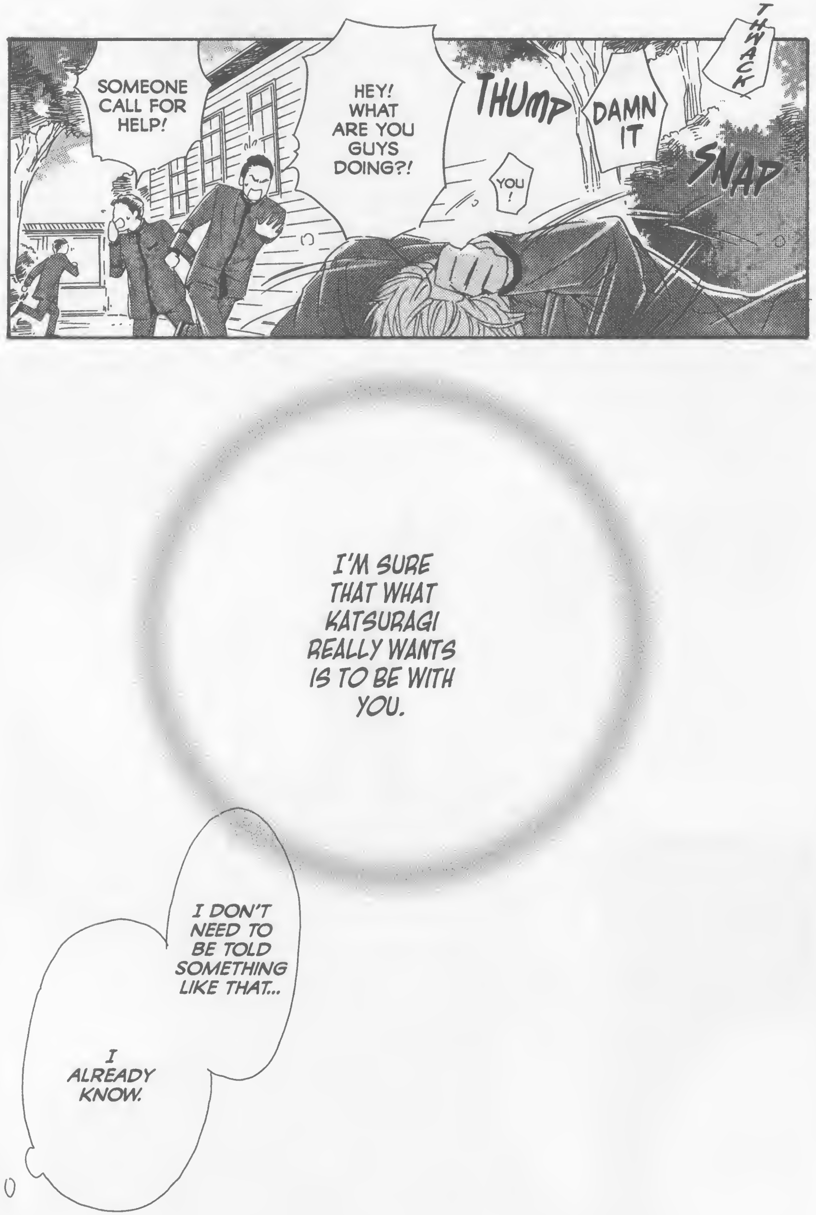

JUST BECAUSE YOU'VE SPENT A LITTLE TIME WITH KATSURAGI, DON'T THINK YOU KNOW HIM!
WHAT KATSURAGI REALLY WANTS. HONESTLY...
KU-
...
IF WE COULD SORT OUT ALL OF THIS JUST BY FOLLOWING OUR FEELINGS, KATSURAGI WOULDN'T HAVE LEFT.
KUZE, YOU...
HE LEFT FOR THE SAKE OF THE KUZE HOUSE.
BECAUSE HE KNEW THAT IF WE CONTINUED TO LIVE TOGETHER, A GREAT NUMBER OF PEOPLE WOULD END UP UNHAPPY.

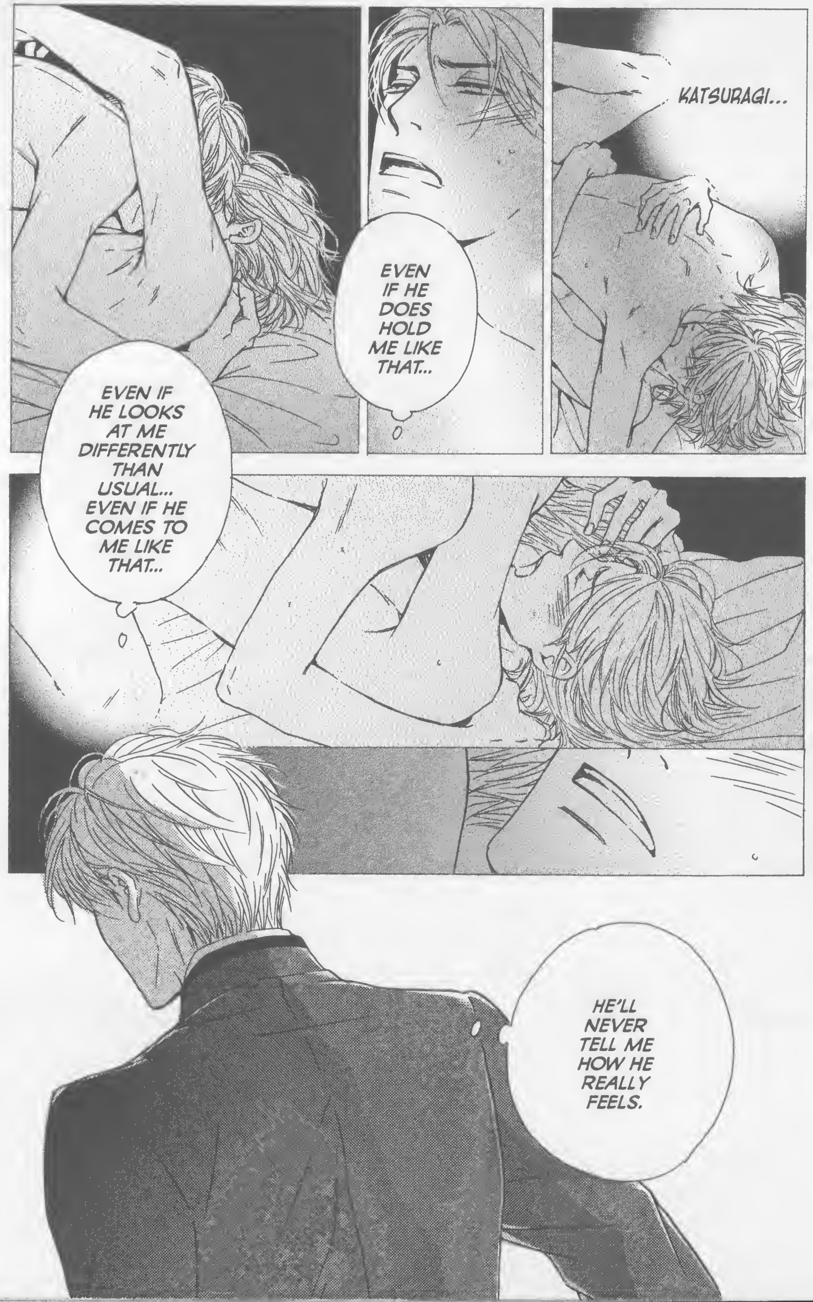

THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO RELY ON THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE, IN BOTH THE MANOR AND IN THE OLD FIEF.
AND SO DESPITE THINGS LIKE LOVE OR AFFECTION ...
...YOU CAN'T JUST INVOLVE THE LIVES OF ALL THOSE PEOPLE IN SOMETHING AS UNCERTAIN AS THAT, CAN YOU?!
...I'M TELLING YOU NOT TO TRY AND CARRY ALL OF THIS ON YOUR OWN!
YANK
THAT'S WHY...
GOT IT? JOIN FORCES WITH AMAMIYA AND TALK TO HIM.
IF YOU LOVE KATSURAGI AS MUCH AS THE LOOK ON YOUR FACE SAYS YOU DO-
YOU'RE ONE TO TALK!

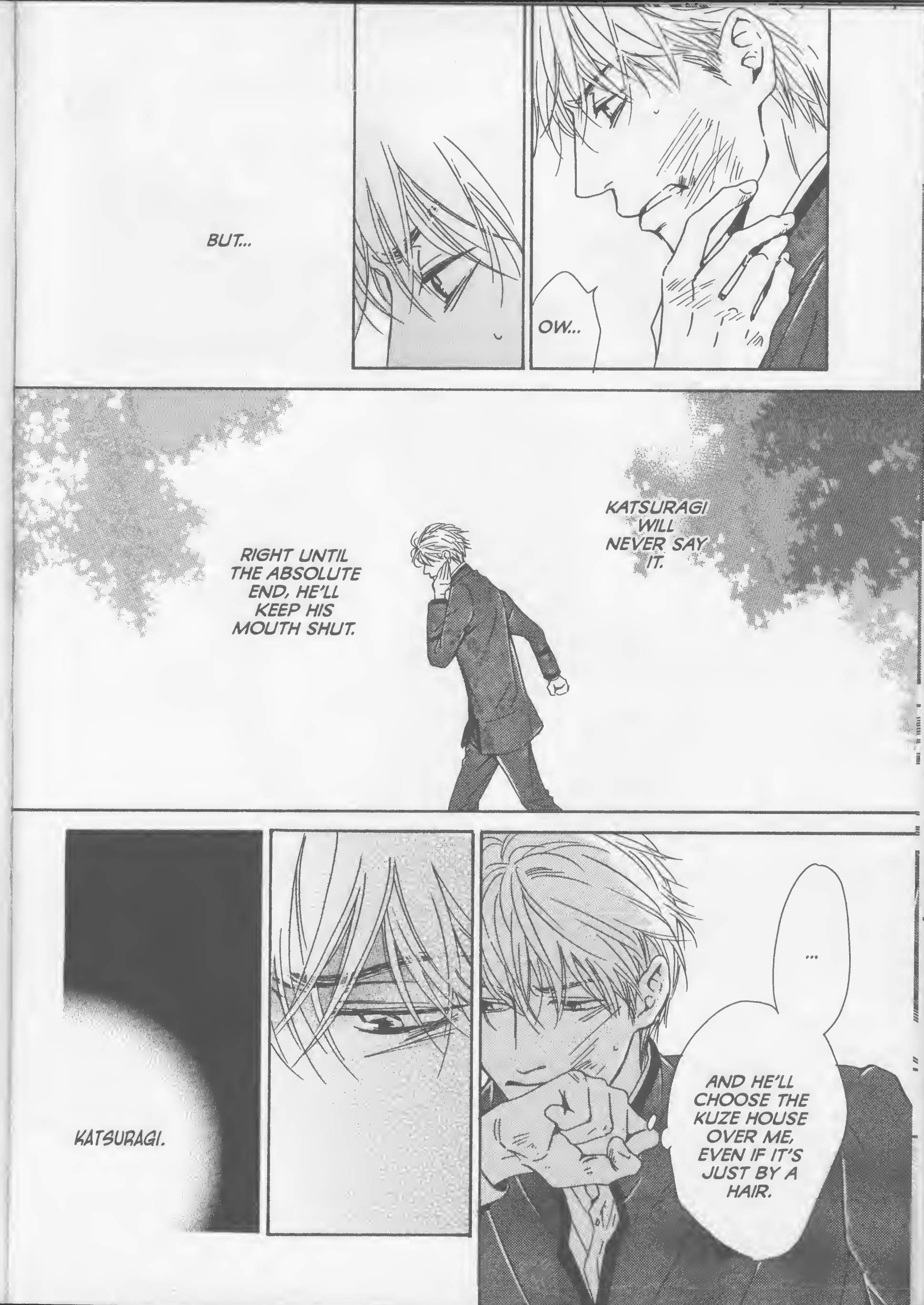

WHAT?!
I MEAN, YOU...
YOU'RE GETTING MARRIED FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR FAMILY, AREN'T YOU?
YOU CAN'T BE WITH THE WOMAN YOU REALLY LOVE BECAUSE OF YOUR FAMILY.
AND LETTING ME HAVE THAT RENTED ROOM IS PROOF OF THAT.
YOU'RE GETTING RID OF KOFUSA.
KUZE!
OR ARE YOU GOING TO KEEP HER AROUND AS YOUR CONCUBINE?
FOR ALL YOUR PRETTY WORDS, YOU'RE THE SAME AS ME.
YOU'RE LIVING FOR THE SAKE OF THE ISHIZAKI FAMILY.
YOU HAVE A DUTY TO FOLLOW IN YOUR FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS AND SUPPORT ALL THOSE PEOPLE UNDER YOU.

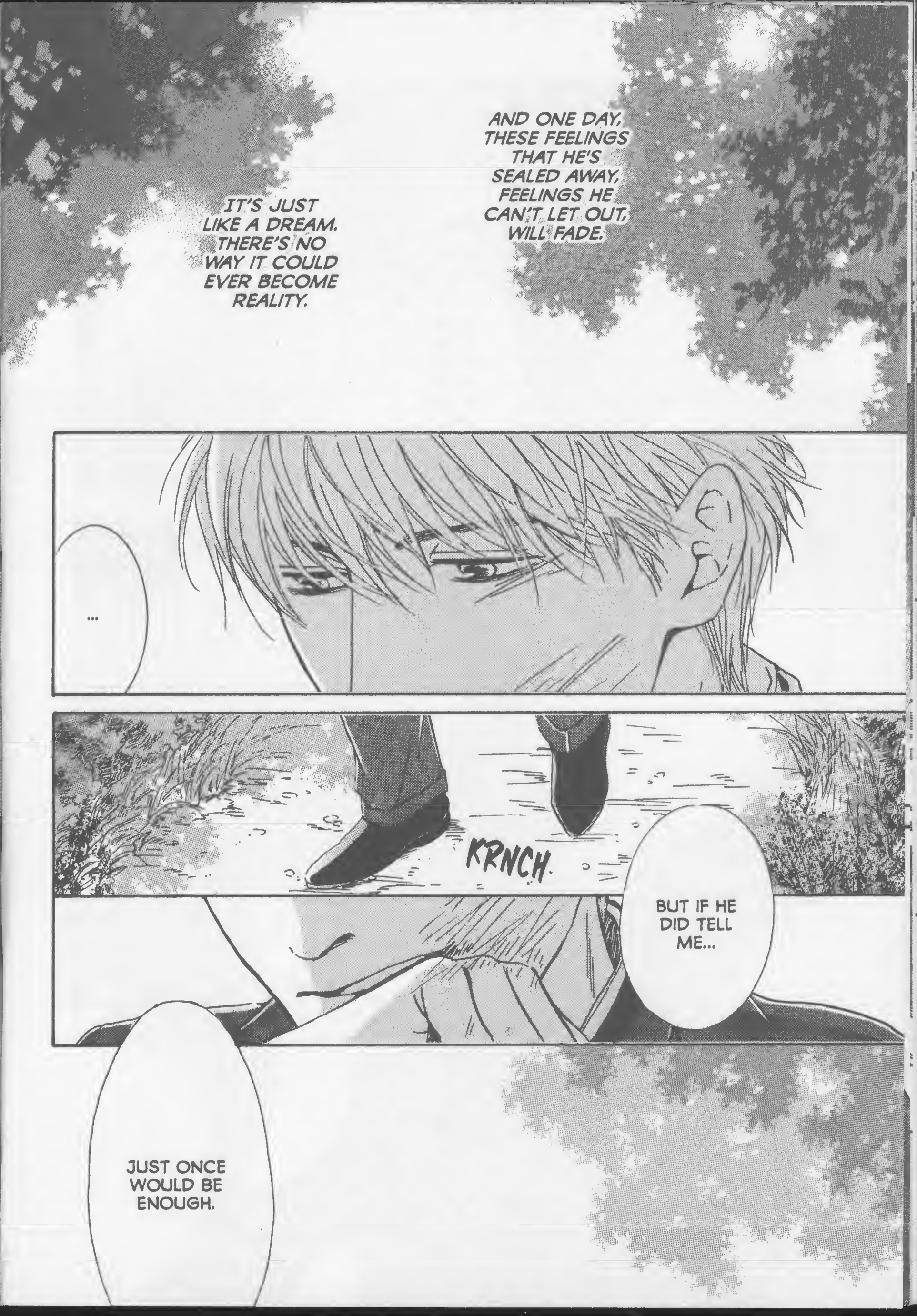

IN ANY CASE, YOU'LL FORGET ALL ABOUT KOFUSA-
WHAP
!
THUD
UUF!
SNAP
SNAP
FLUTTER
...!

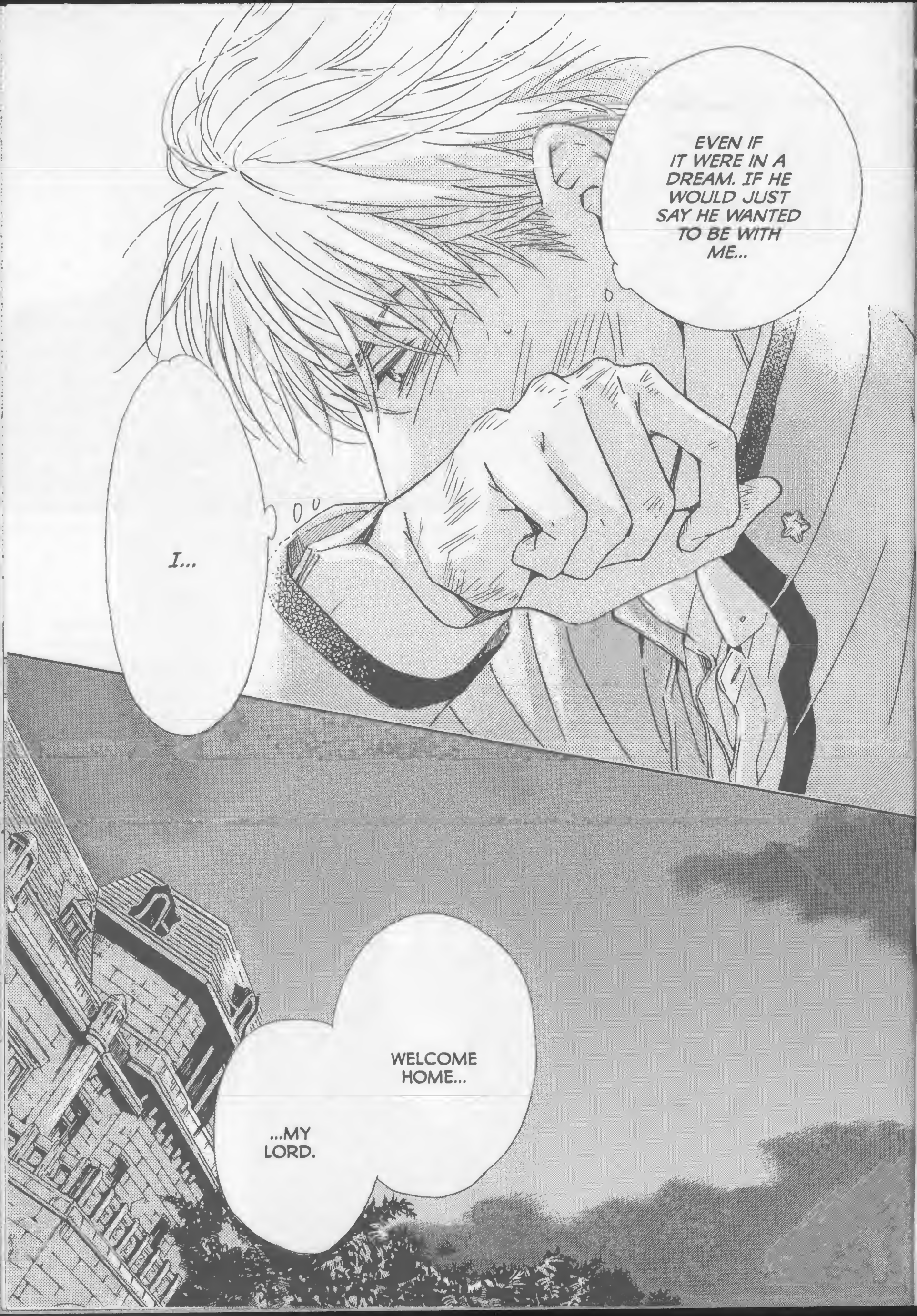

DON'T LASH OUT AT ME!
THE TWO OF YOU CAN GET THROUGH THIS, CAN'T YOU?!
ARGH
AND ANOTHER THING! DON'T EVER COMPARE THAT BLACK-HEARTED KATSURAGI TO SOMEONE AS SWEET AS KOFUSA!
WHAM
OW!
YOU...

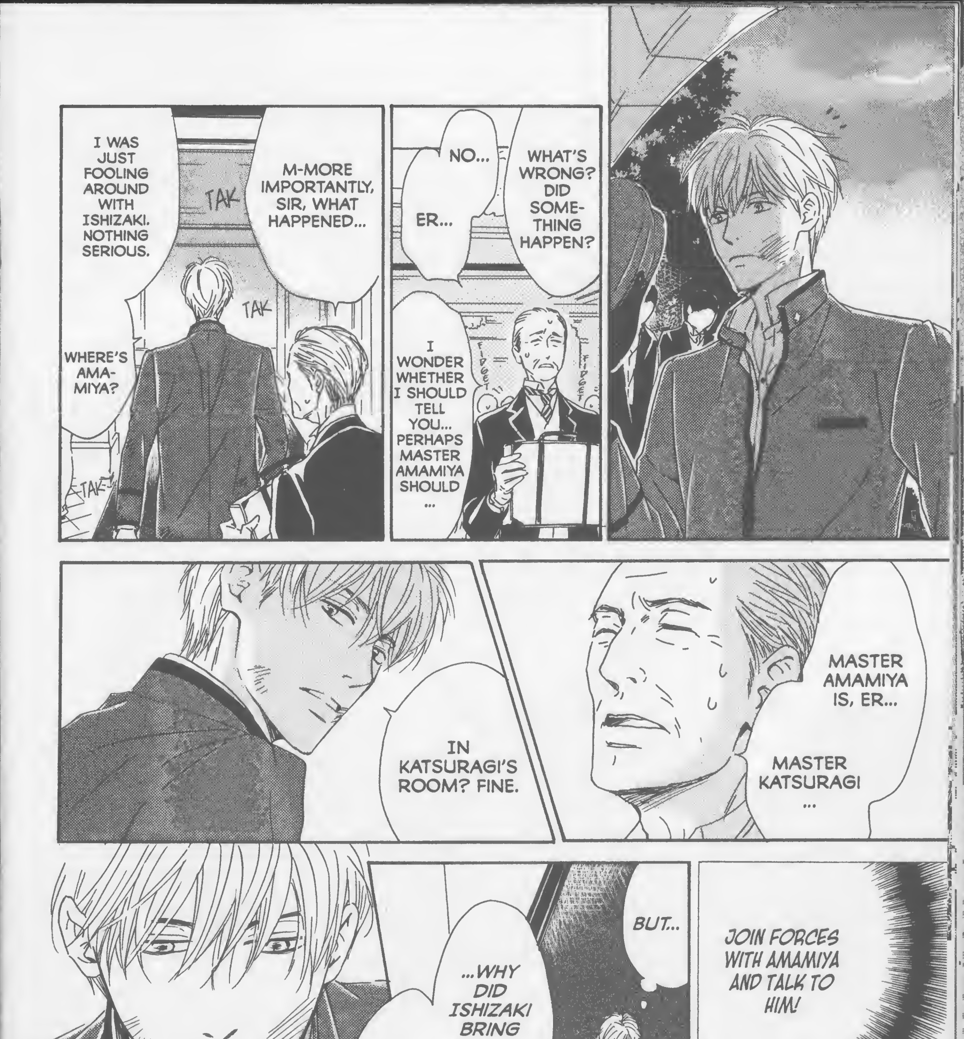

THWACK
SNAP
DAMN IT
THUMP
YOU!
HEY! WHAT ARE YOU GUYS DOING?!
SOMEONE CALL FOR HELP!
I'M SURE THAT WHAT KATSURAGI REALLY WANTS IS TO BE WITH YOU.
I DON'T NEED TO BE TOLD SOMETHING LIKE THAT...
I ALREADY KNOW.

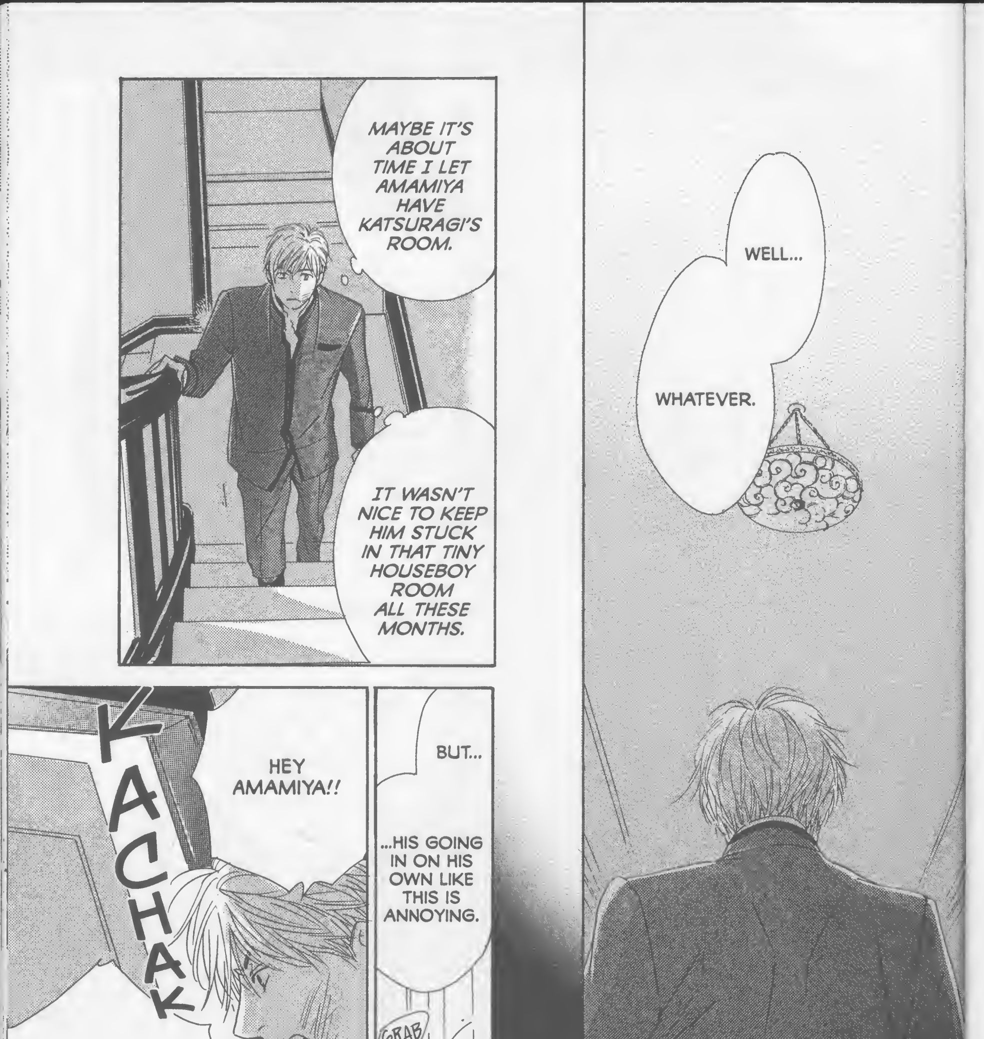

KATSURAGI...
EVEN IF HE DOES HOLD ME LIKE THAT...
EVEN IF HE LOOKS AT ME DIFFERENTLY THAN USUAL... EVEN IF HE COMES TO ME LIKE THAT...
HE'LL NEVER TELL ME HOW HE REALLY FEELS.

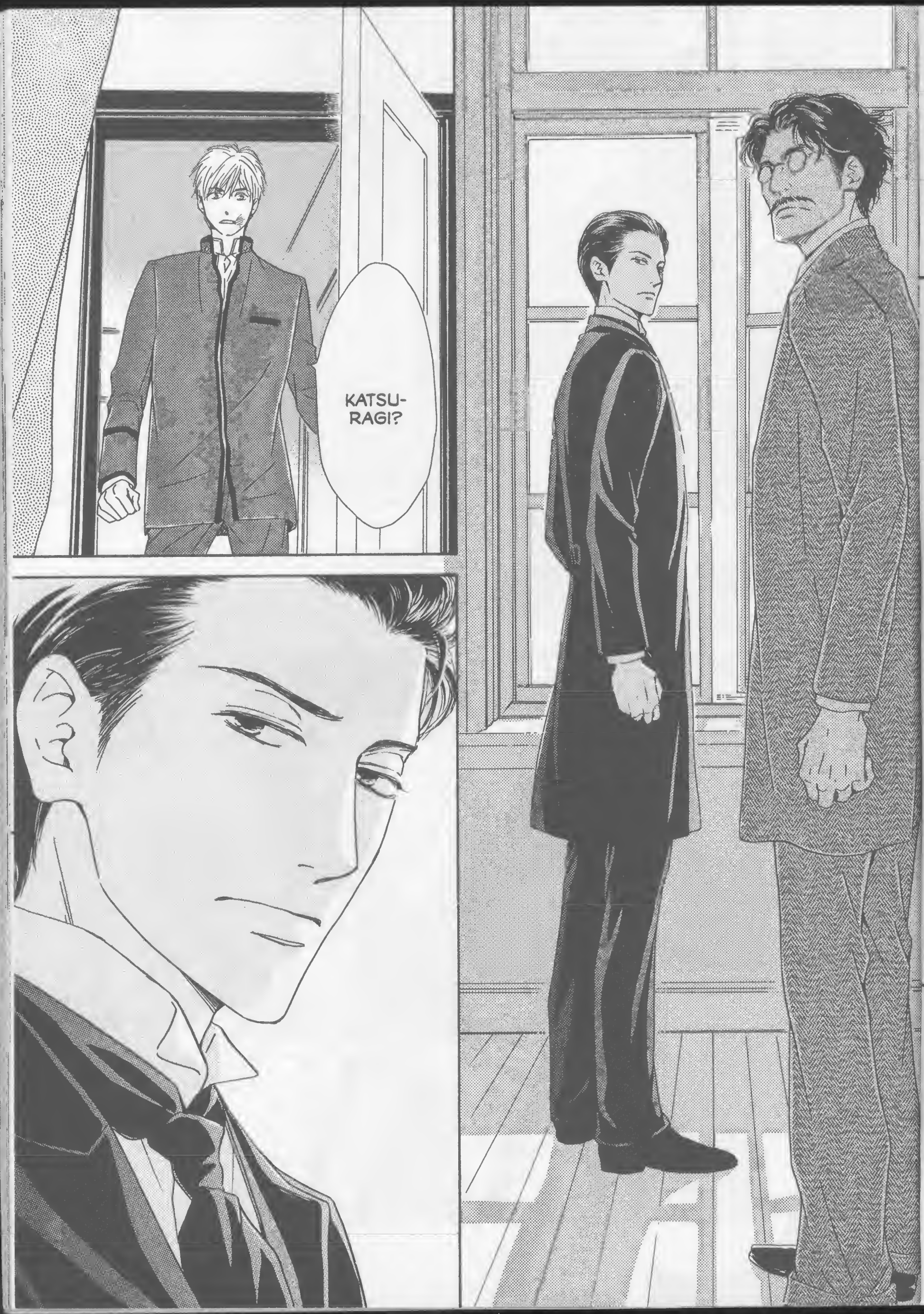

OW...
BUT...
KATSURAGI WILL NEVER SAY IT.
RIGHT UNTIL THE ABSOLUTE END, HE'LL KEEP HIS MOUTH SHUT.
...
AND HE'LL CHOOSE THE KUZE HOUSE OVER ME, EVEN IF IT'S JUST BY A HAIR.
KATSURAGI.

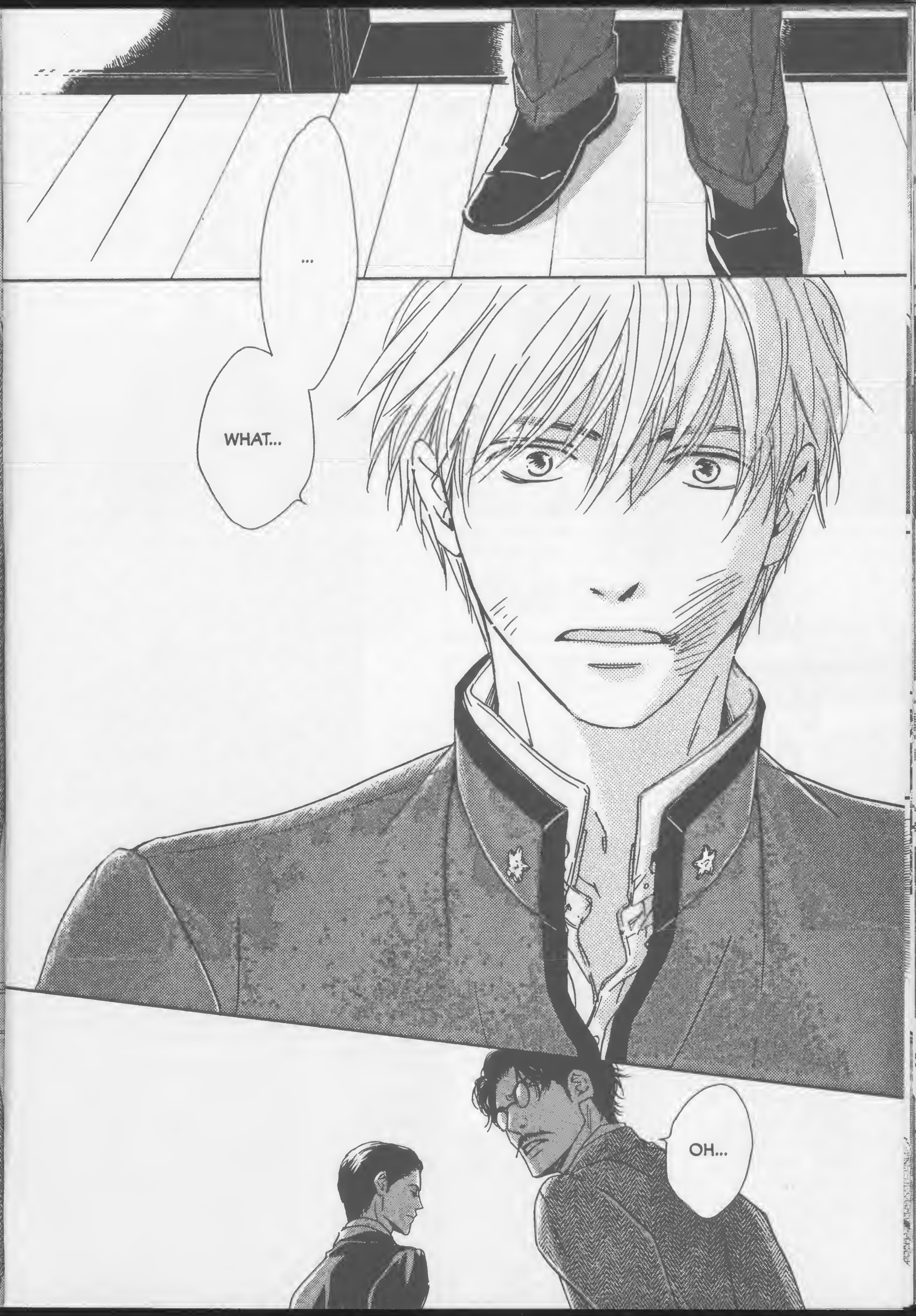

AND ONE DAY, THESE FEELINGS THAT HE'S SEALED AWAY, FEELINGS HE CAN'T LET OUT, WILL FADE.
IT'S JUST LIKE A DREAM. THERE'S NO WAY IT COULD EVER BECOME REALITY.
...
KRNCH
BUT IF HE DID TELL ME...
JUST ONCE WOULD BE ENOUGH.

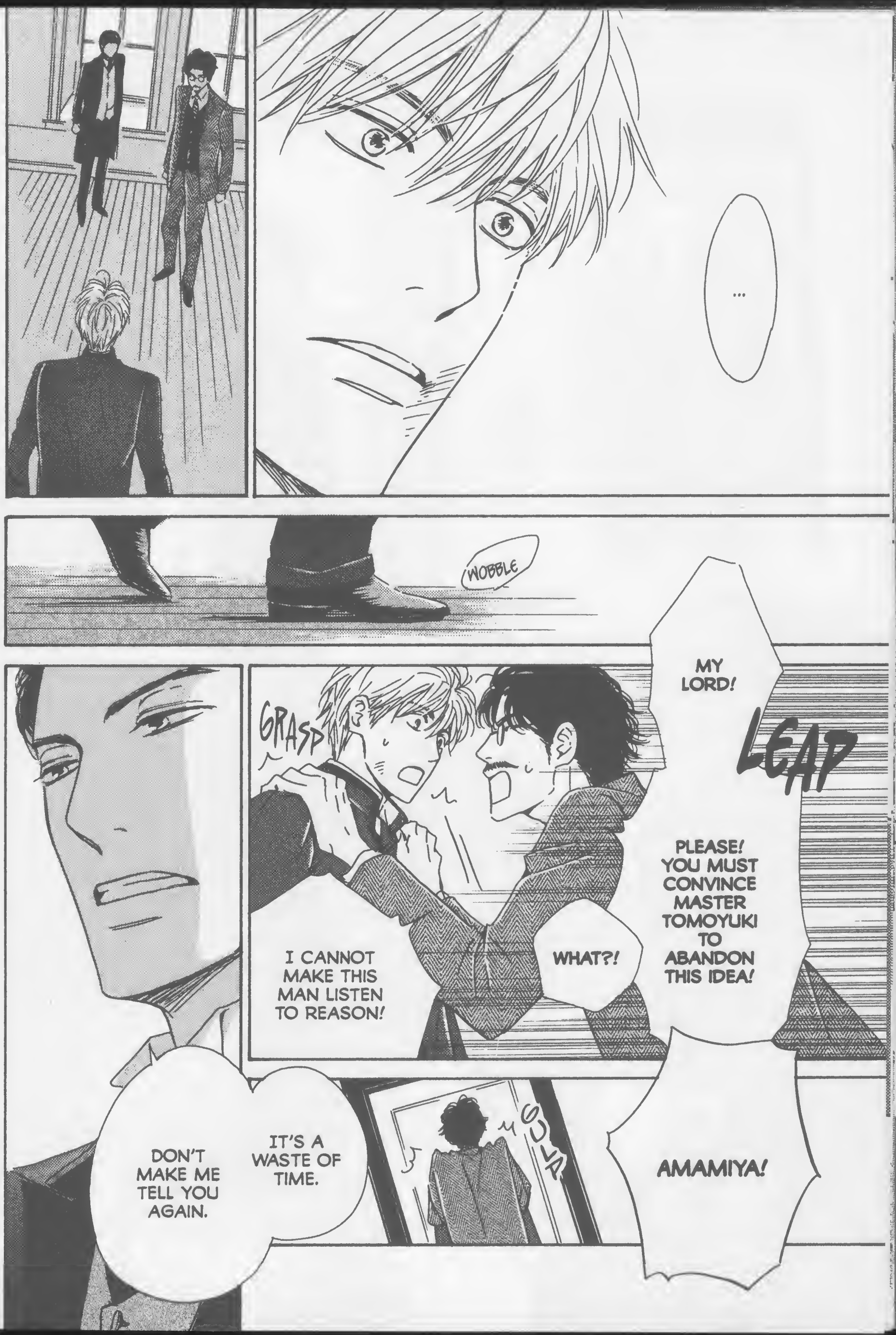

EVEN IF IT WERE IN A DREAM. IF HE WOULD JUST SAY HE WANTED TO BE WITH ME...
I...
WELCOME HOME...
...MY LORD.

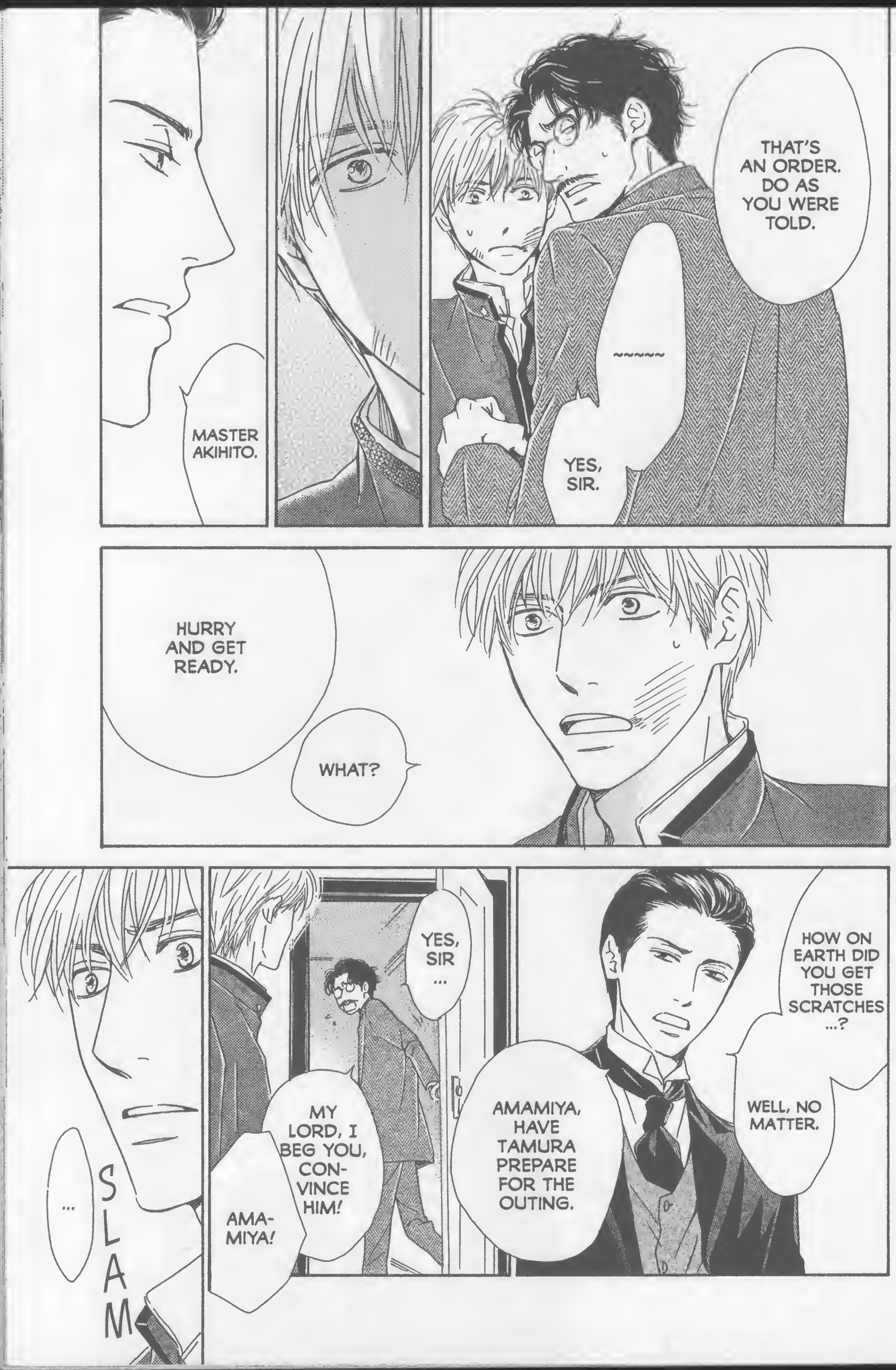

WHAT'S WRONG? DID SOMETHING HAPPEN?
NO...
ER...
I WONDER WHETHER I SHOULD TELL YOU... PERHAPS MASTER AMAMIYA SHOULD ...
FIDGET
FIDGET
M-MORE IMPORTANTLY, SIR, WHAT HAPPENED...
TAK
TAK
TAK
I WAS JUST FOOLING AROUND WITH ISHIZAKI. NOTHING SERIOUS.
WHERE'S AMA-MIYA?
MASTER AMAMIYA IS, ER...
MASTER KATSURAGI ...
IN KATSURAGI'S ROOM? FINE.
JOIN FORCES WITH AMAMIYA AND TALK TO HIM!
BUT...
...WHY DID ISHIZAKI BRING AMAMIYA UP?
DID KATSURAGI SAY SOMETHING TO HIM?
SOMETHING ABOUT ME...
...

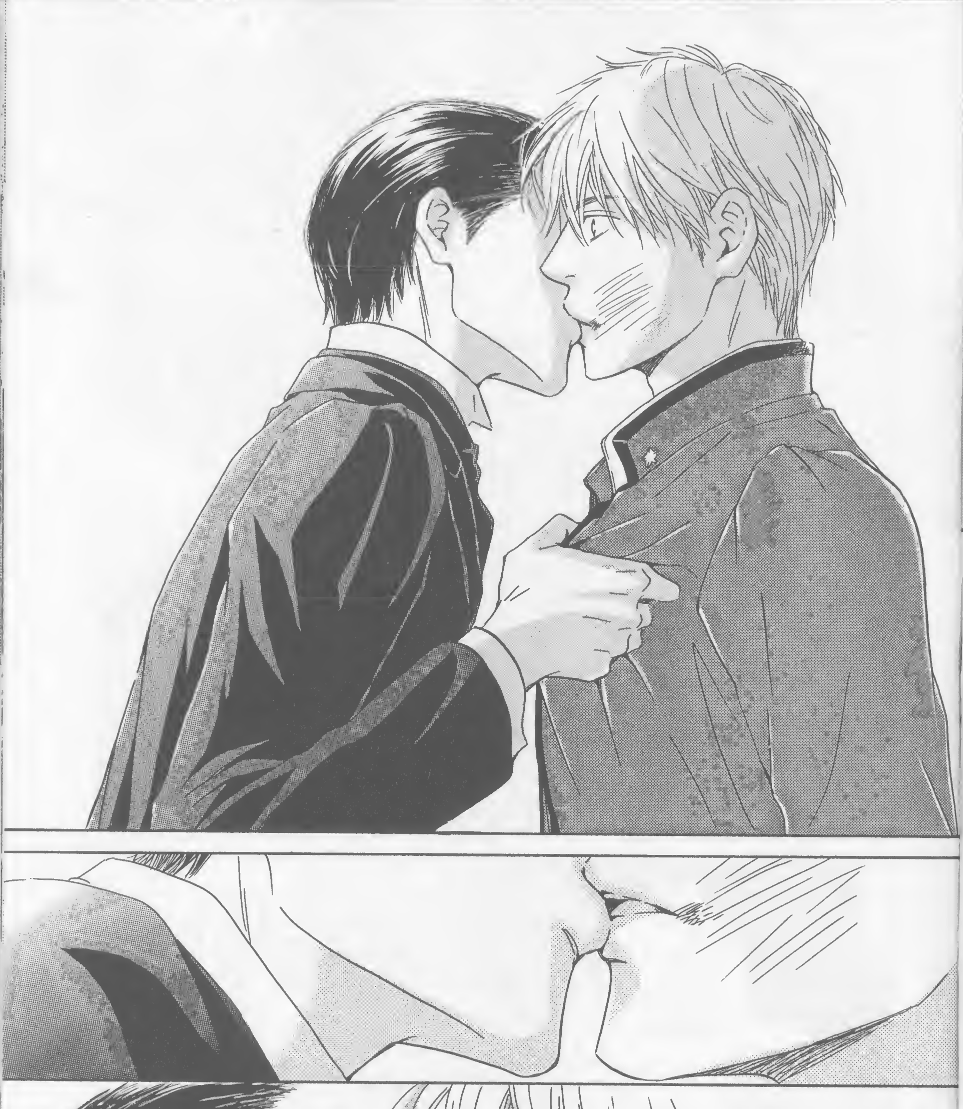

WELL...
WHATEVER.
MAYBE IT'S ABOUT TIME I LET AMAMIYA HAVE KATSURAGI'S ROOM.
IT WASN'T NICE TO KEEP HIM STUCK IN THAT TINY HOUSEBOY ROOM ALL THESE MONTHS.
BUT...
...HIS GOING IN ON HIS OWN LIKE THIS IS ANNOYING.
GRAB
KACHAK
HEY AMAMIYA!!
HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU NOT TO GO IN THIS–

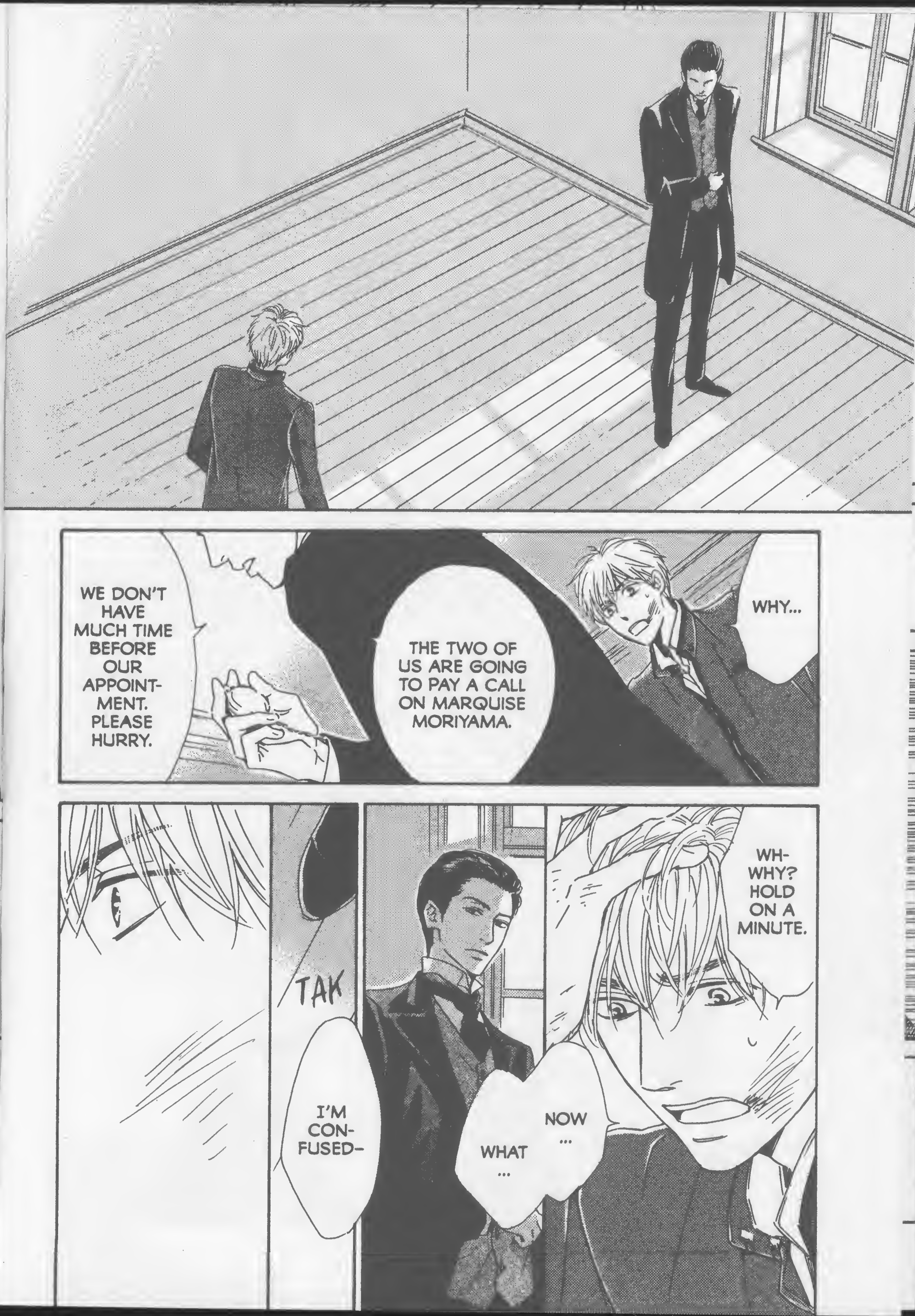

KATSU-RAGI?

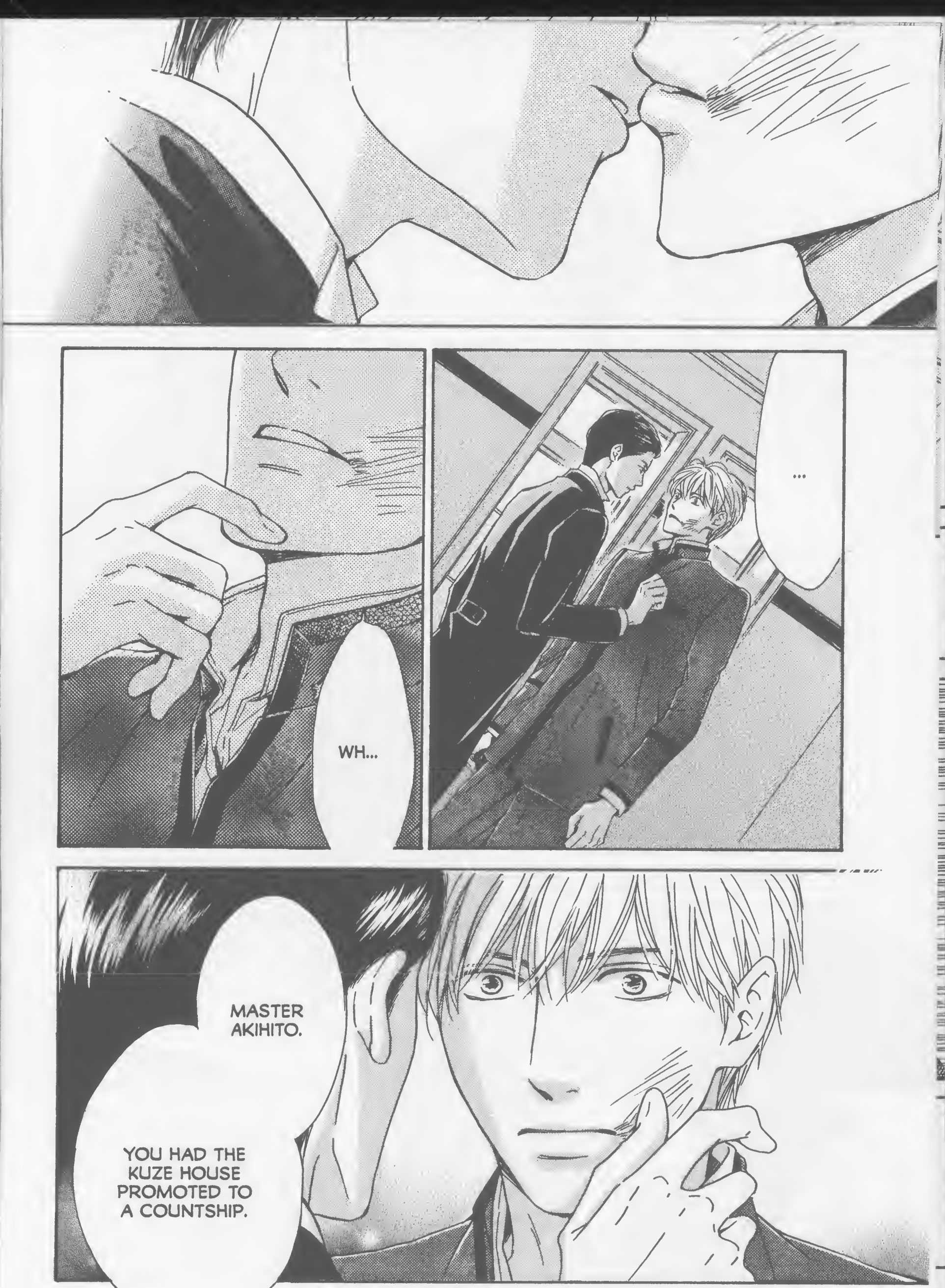

...
WHAT...
OH...

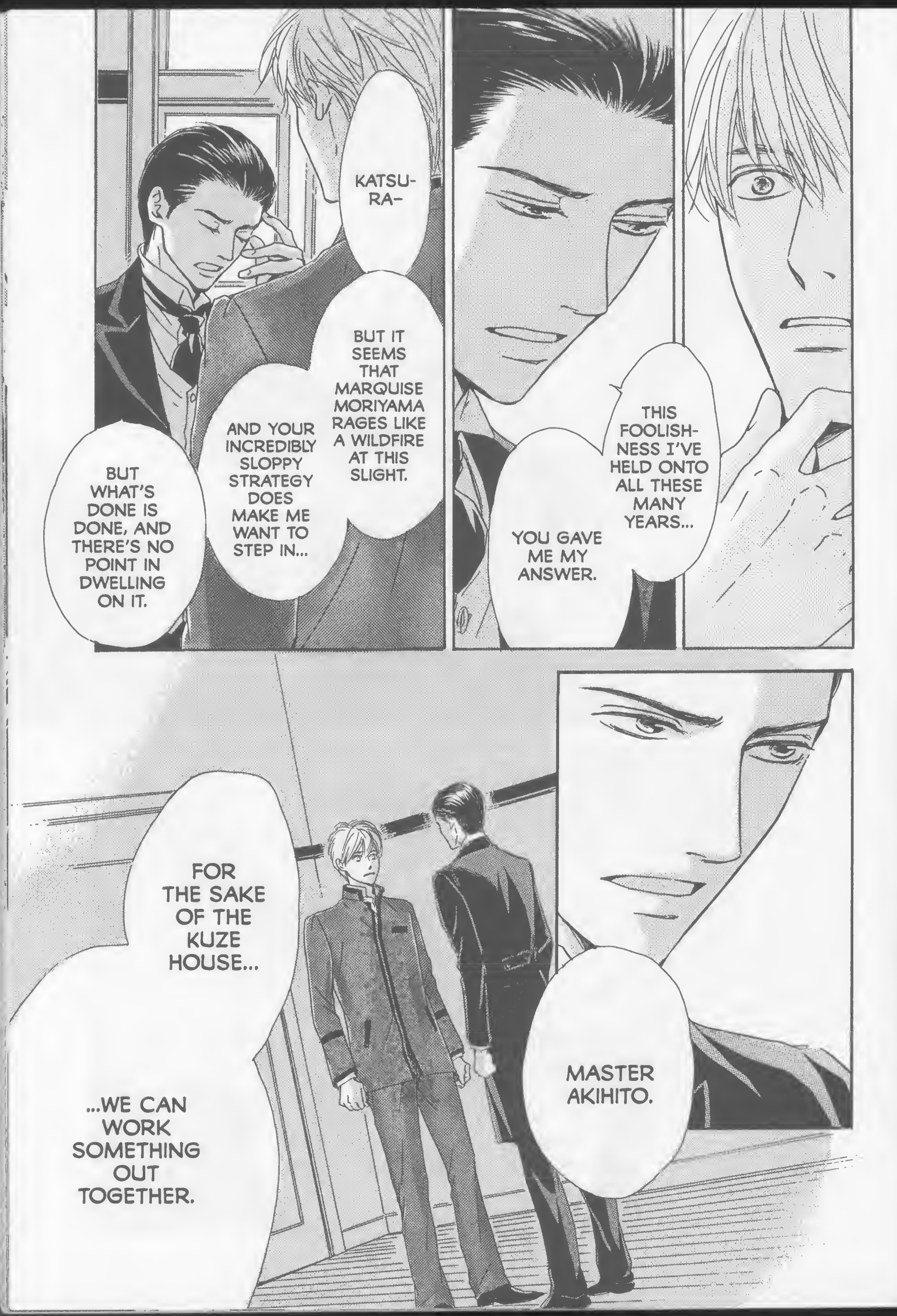

...
WOBBLE
MY LORD!
LEAP
PLEASE! YOU MUST CONVINCE MASTER TOMOYUKI TO ABANDON THIS IDEA!
GRASP
WHAT?!
I CANNOT MAKE THIS MAN LISTEN TO REASON!
IT'S A WASTE OF TIME.
DON'T MAKE ME TELL YOU AGAIN.
GULP
AMAMIYA!

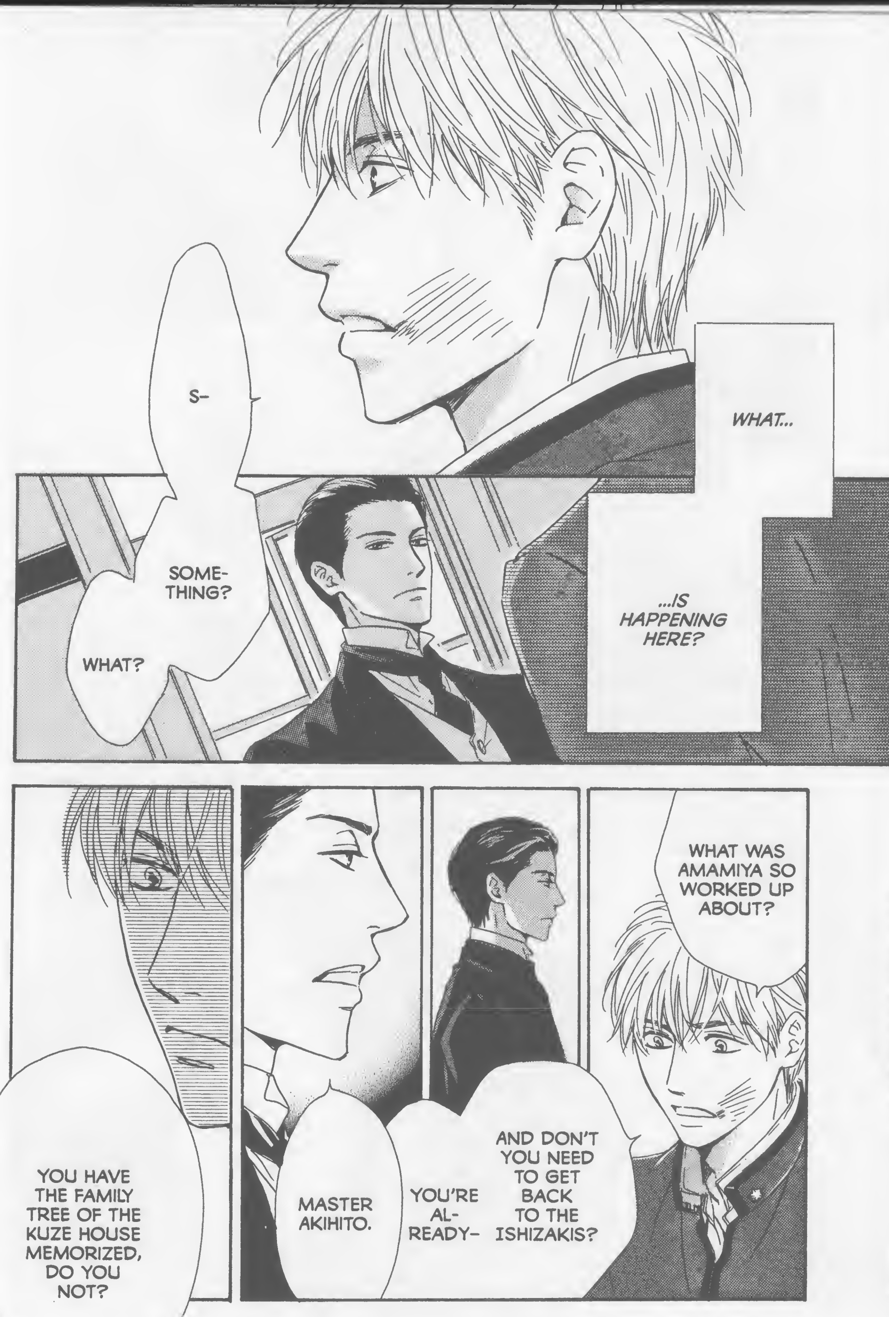

THAT'S AN ORDER. DO AS YOU WERE TOLD.
~~~~~
YES, SIR.
MASTER AKIHITO.
HURRY AND GET READY.
WHAT?
HOW ON EARTH DID YOU GET THOSE SCRATCHES ...?
WELL, NO MATTER.
AMAMIYA, HAVE TAMURA PREPARE FOR THE OUTING.
YES, SIR ...
MY LORD, I BEG YOU, CONVINCE HIM!
AMA-MIYA!
...
SLAM
~~~~~

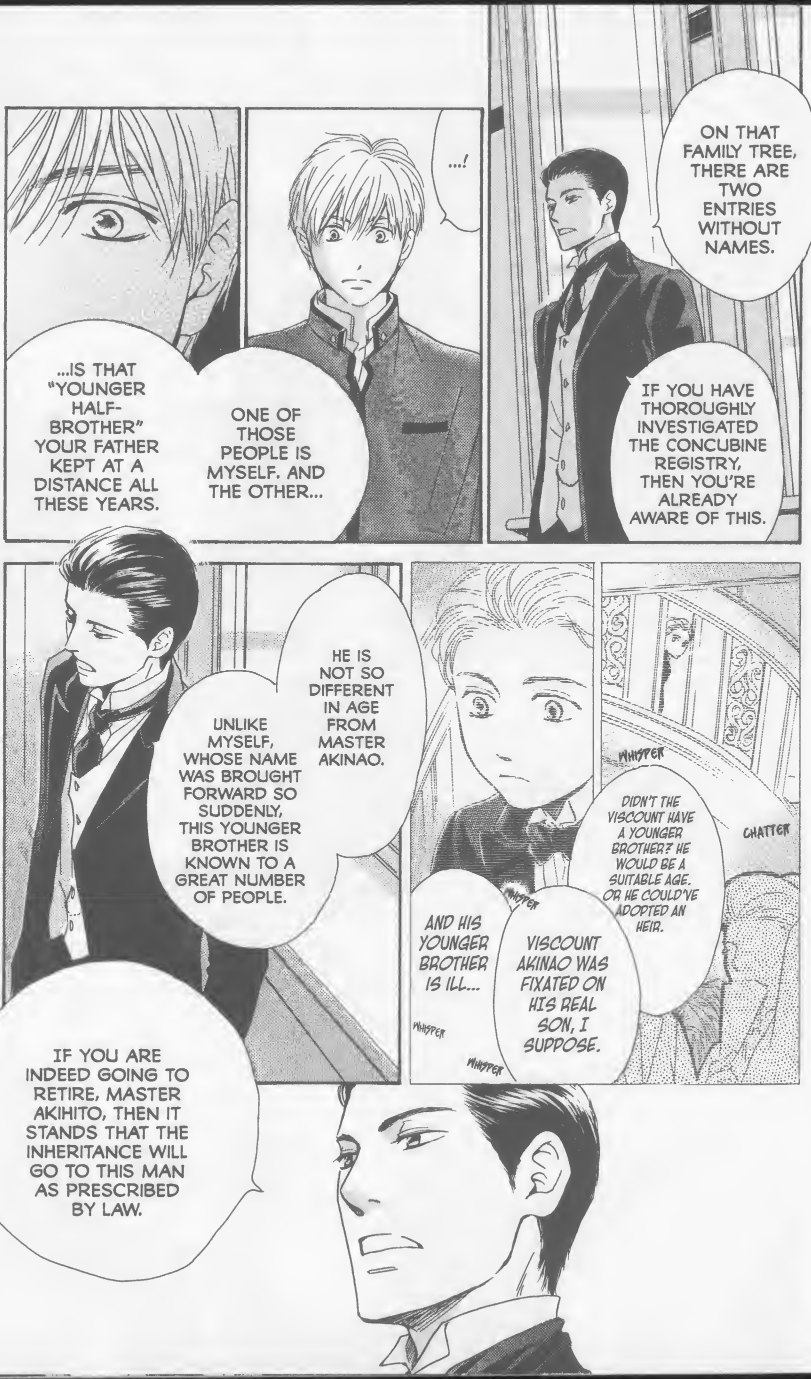


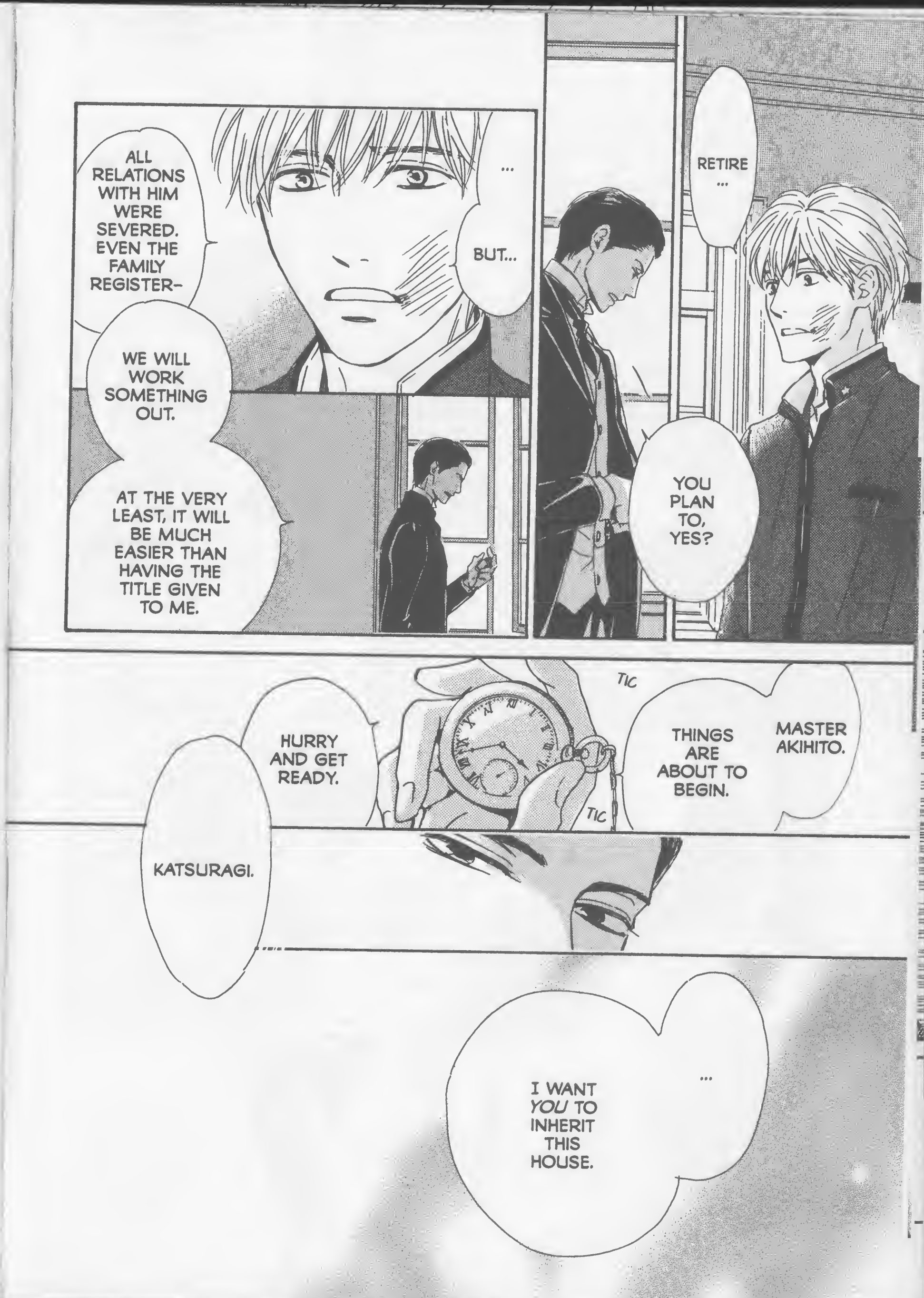

WHY...
THE TWO OF US ARE GOING TO PAY A CALL ON MARQUISE MORIYAMA.
WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME BEFORE OUR APPOINTMENT. PLEASE HURRY.
WH- WHY? HOLD ON A MINUTE.
NOW ...
WHAT ...
I'M CONFUSED-
TAK

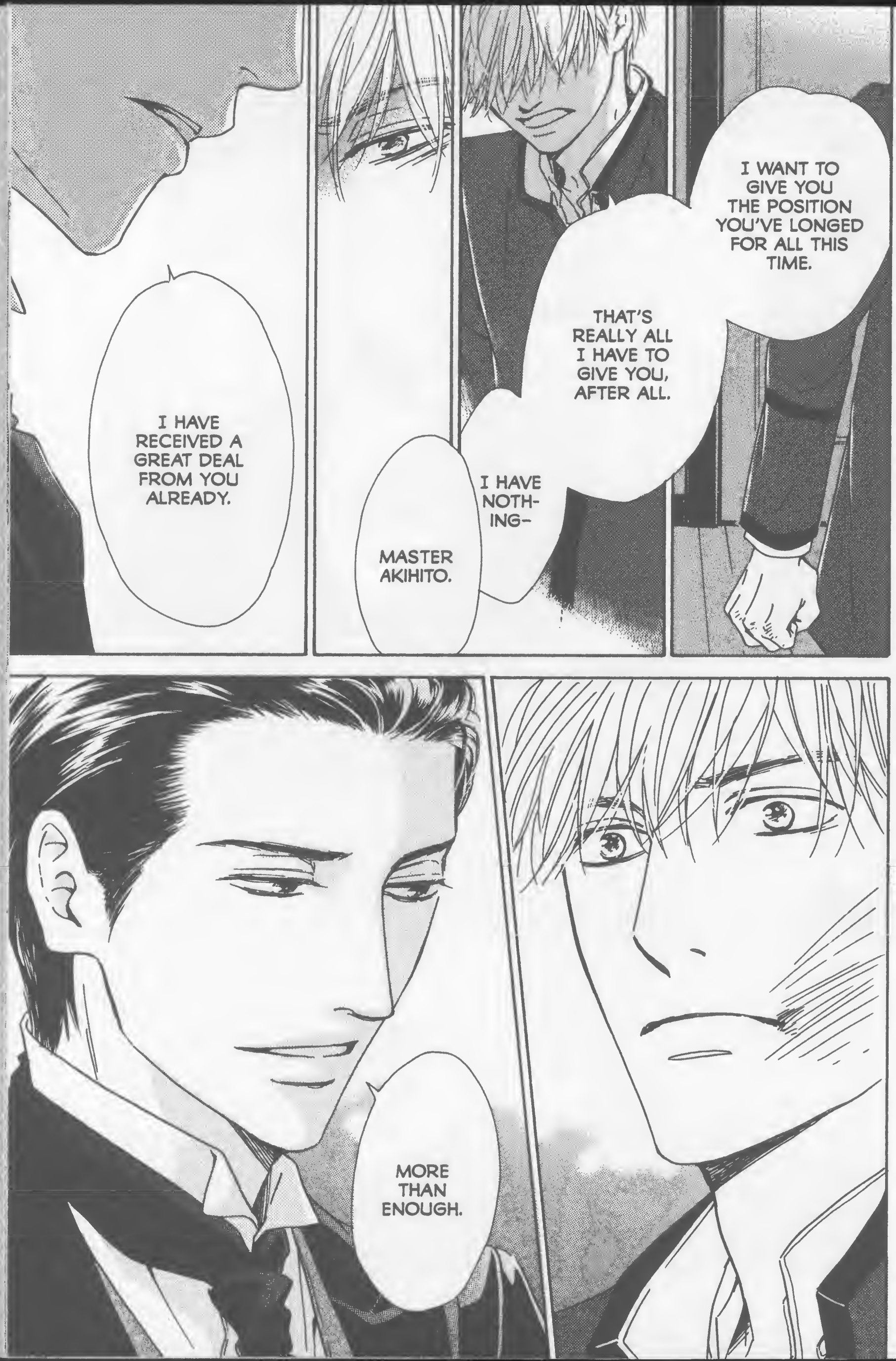

...
WH...
MASTER AKIHITO.
YOU HAD THE KUZE HOUSE PROMOTED TO A COUNTSHIP.

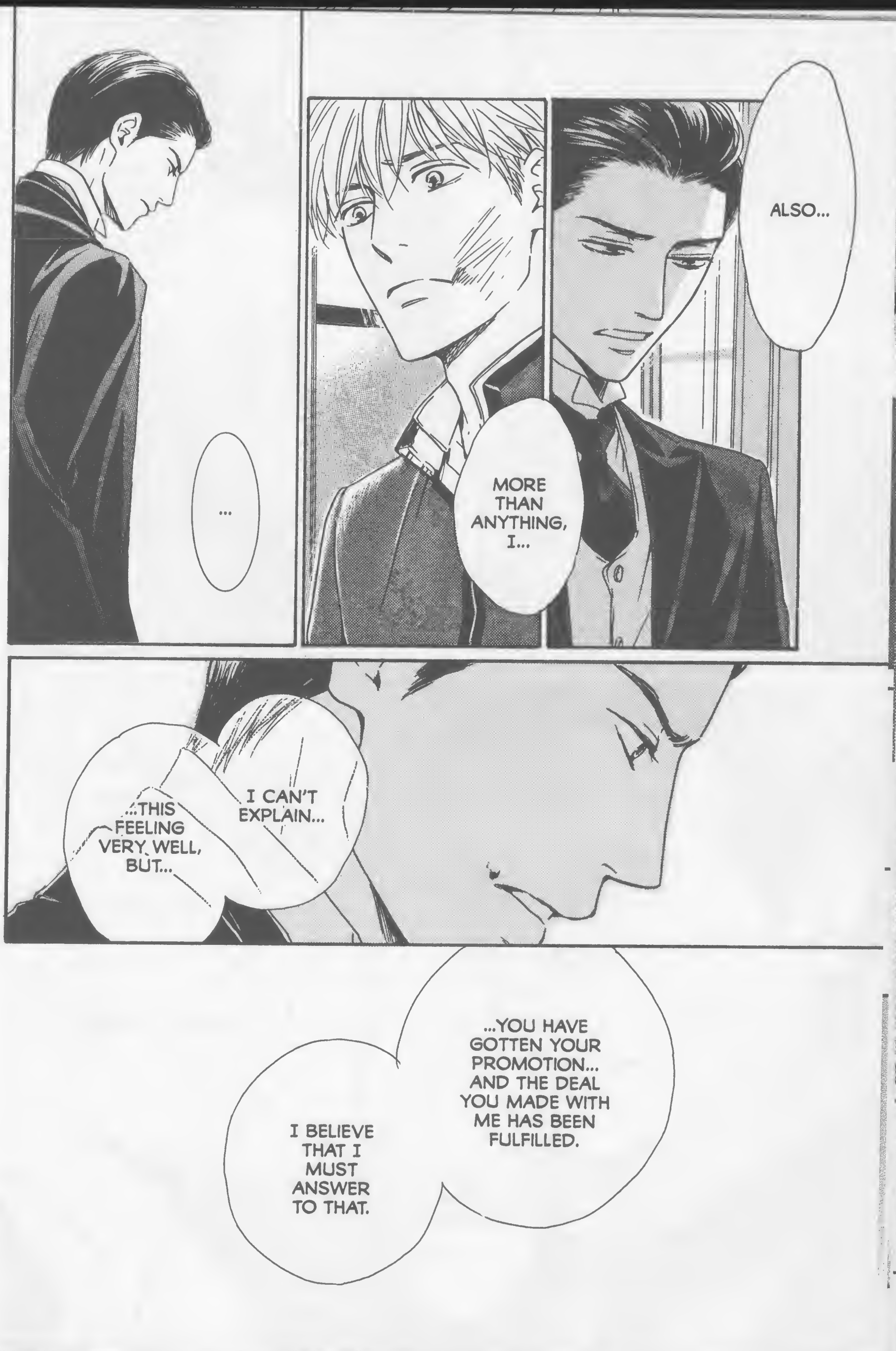

KATSURA–
THIS FOOLISHNESS I'VE HELD ONTO ALL THESE MANY YEARS...
YOU GAVE ME MY ANSWER.
BUT IT SEEMS THAT MARQUISE MORIYAMA RAGES LIKE A WILDFIRE AT THIS SLIGHT.
AND YOUR INCREDIBLY SLOPPY STRATEGY DOES MAKE ME WANT TO STEP IN...
BUT WHAT'S DONE IS DONE, AND THERE'S NO POINT IN DWELLING ON IT.
MASTER AKIHITO.
FOR THE SAKE OF THE KUZE HOUSE...
...WE CAN WORK SOMETHING OUT TOGETHER.

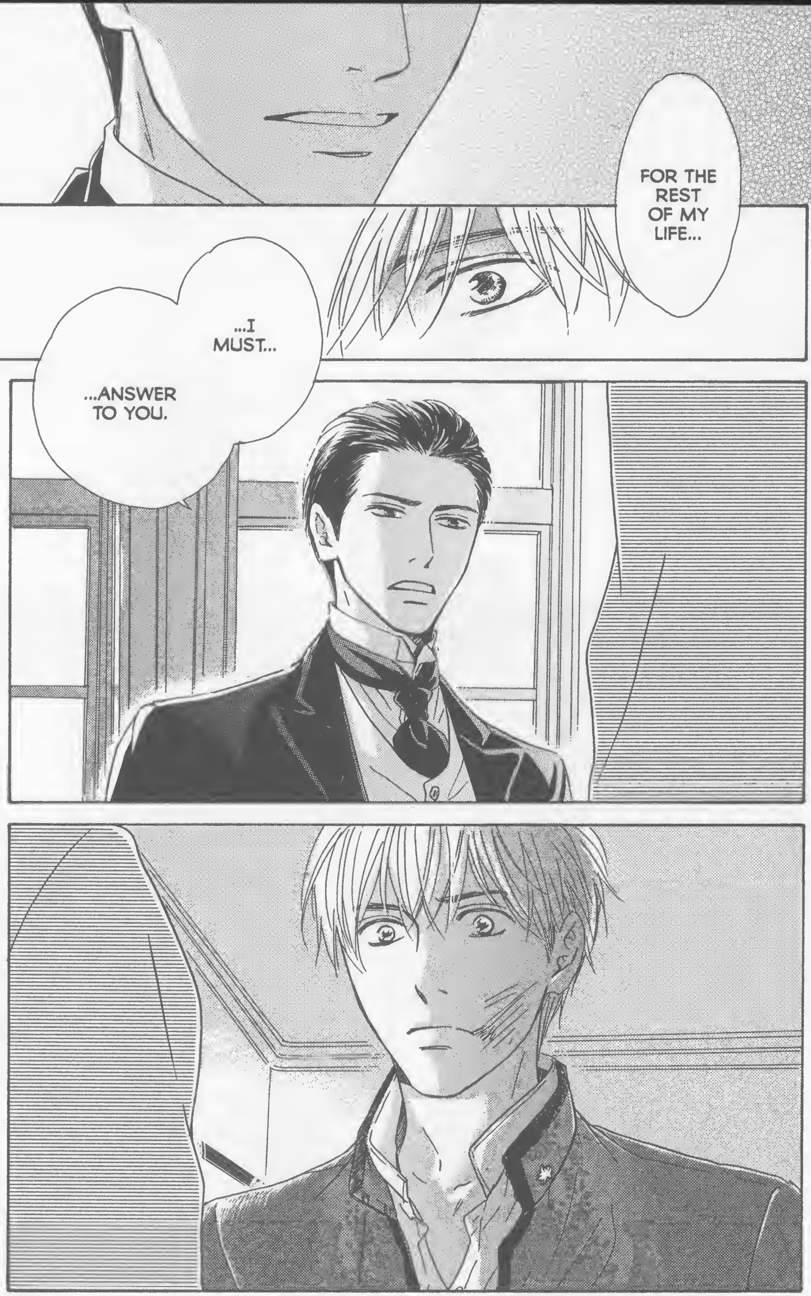

WHAT...
...IS HAPPENING HERE?
S-
SOMETHING?
WHAT?
WHAT WAS AMAMIYA SO WORKED UP ABOUT?
AND DON'T YOU NEED TO GET BACK TO THE ISHIZAKIS?
YOU'RE ALREADY-
MASTER AKIHITO.
YOU HAVE THE FAMILY TREE OF THE KUZE HOUSE MEMORIZED, DO YOU NOT?

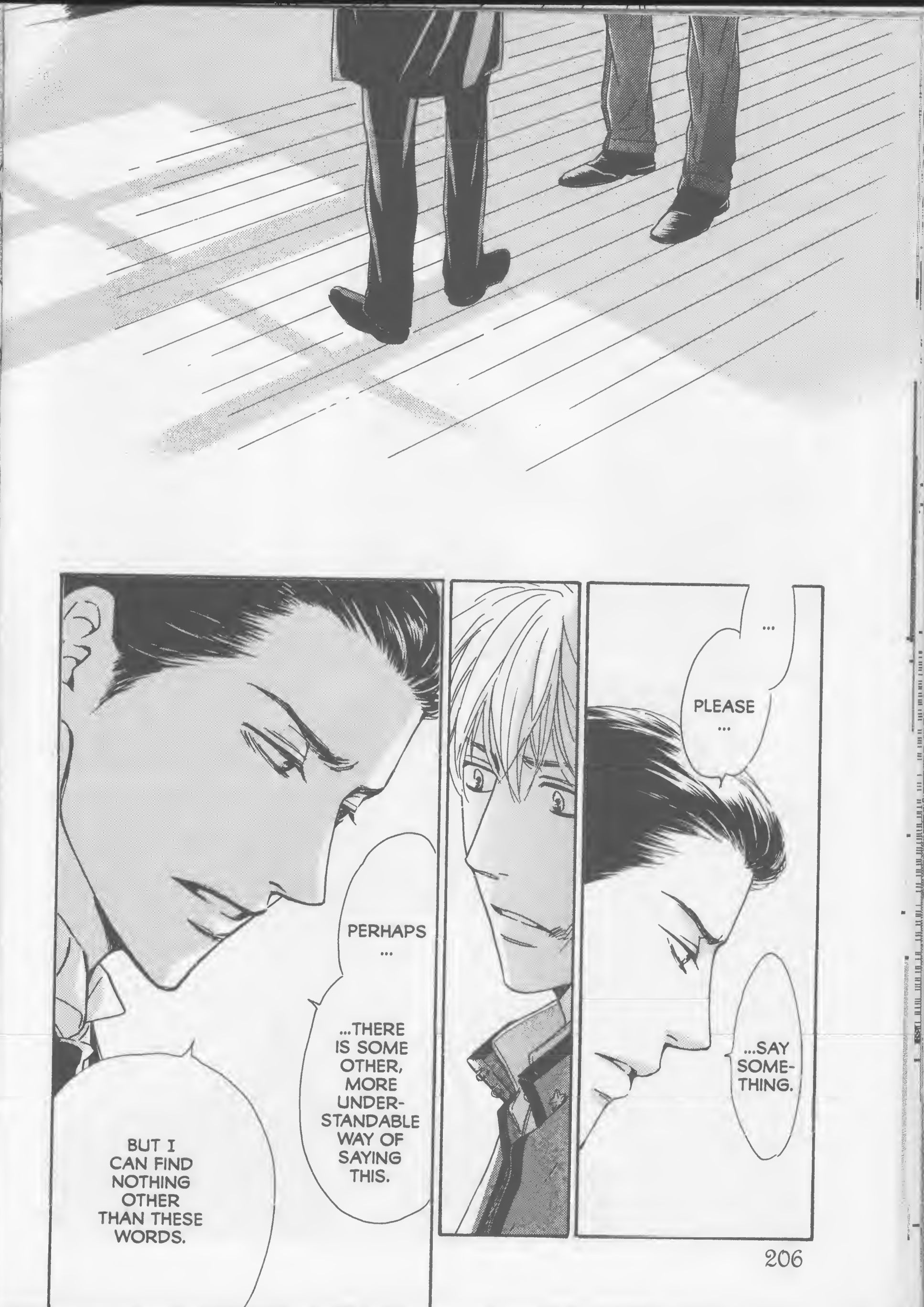

ON THAT FAMILY TREE, THERE ARE TWO ENTRIES WITHOUT NAMES.
IF YOU HAVE THOROUGHLY INVESTIGATED THE CONCUBINE REGISTRY, THEN YOU'RE ALREADY AWARE OF THIS.
...!
ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE IS MYSELF. AND THE OTHER...
...IS THAT "YOUNGER HALF-BROTHER" YOUR FATHER KEPT AT A DISTANCE ALL THESE YEARS.
CHATTER
DIDN'T THE VISCOUNT HAVE A YOUNGER BROTHER? HE WOULD BE A SUITABLE AGE. OR HE COULD'VE ADOPTED AN HEIR.
WHISPER
WHISPER
VISCOUNT AKINAO WAS FIXATED ON HIS REAL SON, I SUPPOSE.
AND HIS YOUNGER BROTHER IS ILL...
WHISPER
WHISPER
HE IS NOT SO DIFFERENT IN AGE FROM MASTER AKINAO.
UNLIKE MYSELF, WHOSE NAME WAS BROUGHT FORWARD SO SUDDENLY, THIS YOUNGER BROTHER IS KNOWN TO A GREAT NUMBER OF PEOPLE.
IF YOU ARE INDEED GOING TO RETIRE, MASTER AKIHITO, THEN IT STANDS THAT THE INHERITANCE WILL GO TO THIS MAN AS PRESCRIBED BY LAW.

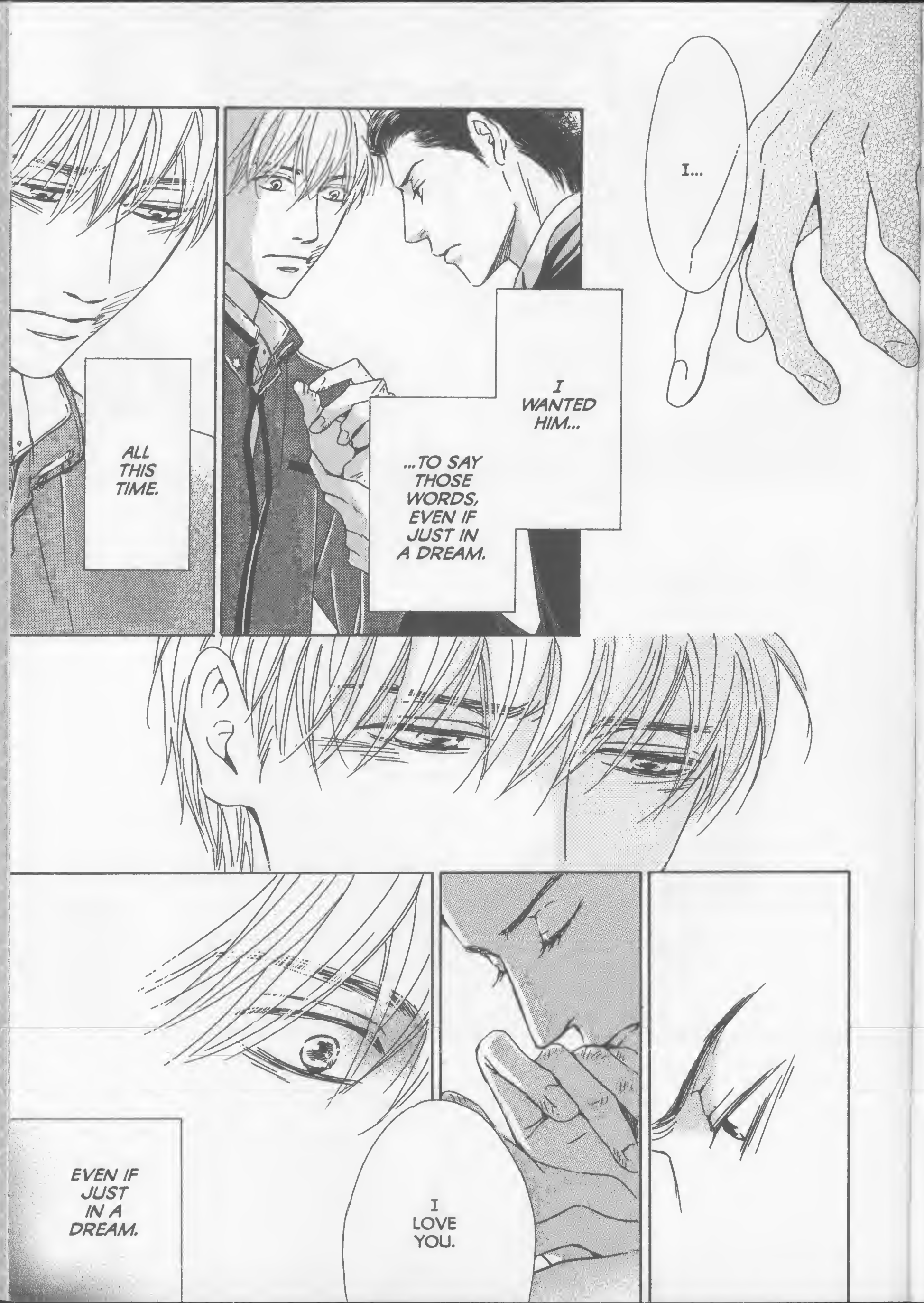

RETIRE ...
YOU PLAN TO, YES?
...
BUT...
ALL RELATIONS WITH HIM WERE SEVERED. EVEN THE FAMILY REGISTER–
WE WILL WORK SOMETHING OUT.
AT THE VERY LEAST, IT WILL BE MUCH EASIER THAN HAVING THE TITLE GIVEN TO ME.
MASTER AKIHITO.
THINGS ARE ABOUT TO BEGIN.
TIC
TIC
HURRY AND GET READY.
KATSURAGI.
...
I WANT *YOU* TO INHERIT THIS HOUSE.

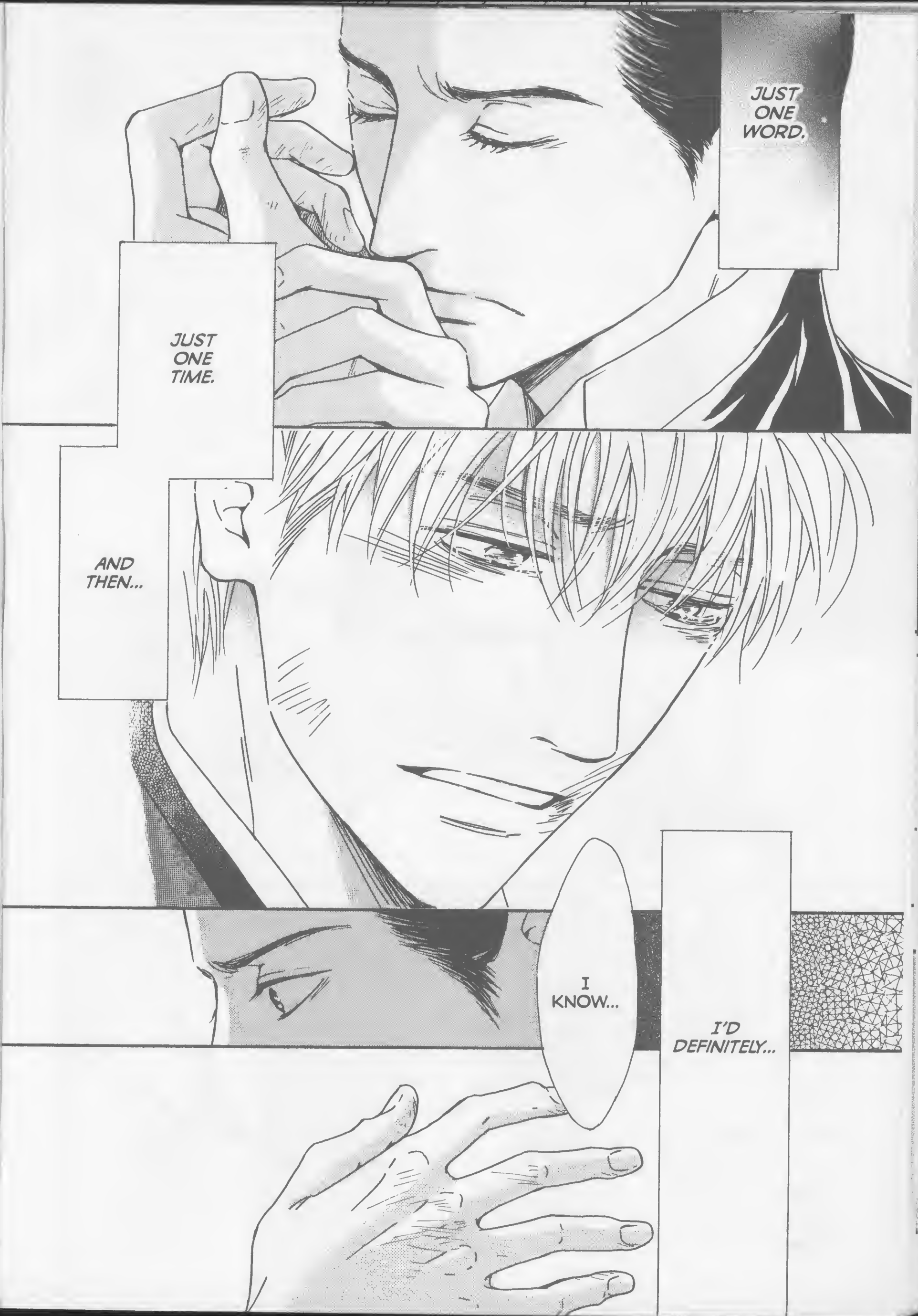

I WANT TO GIVE YOU THE POSITION YOU'VE LONGED FOR ALL THIS TIME.
THAT'S REALLY ALL I HAVE TO GIVE YOU, AFTER ALL.
I HAVE NOTHING–
MASTER AKIHITO.
I HAVE RECEIVED A GREAT DEAL FROM YOU ALREADY.
MORE THAN ENOUGH.

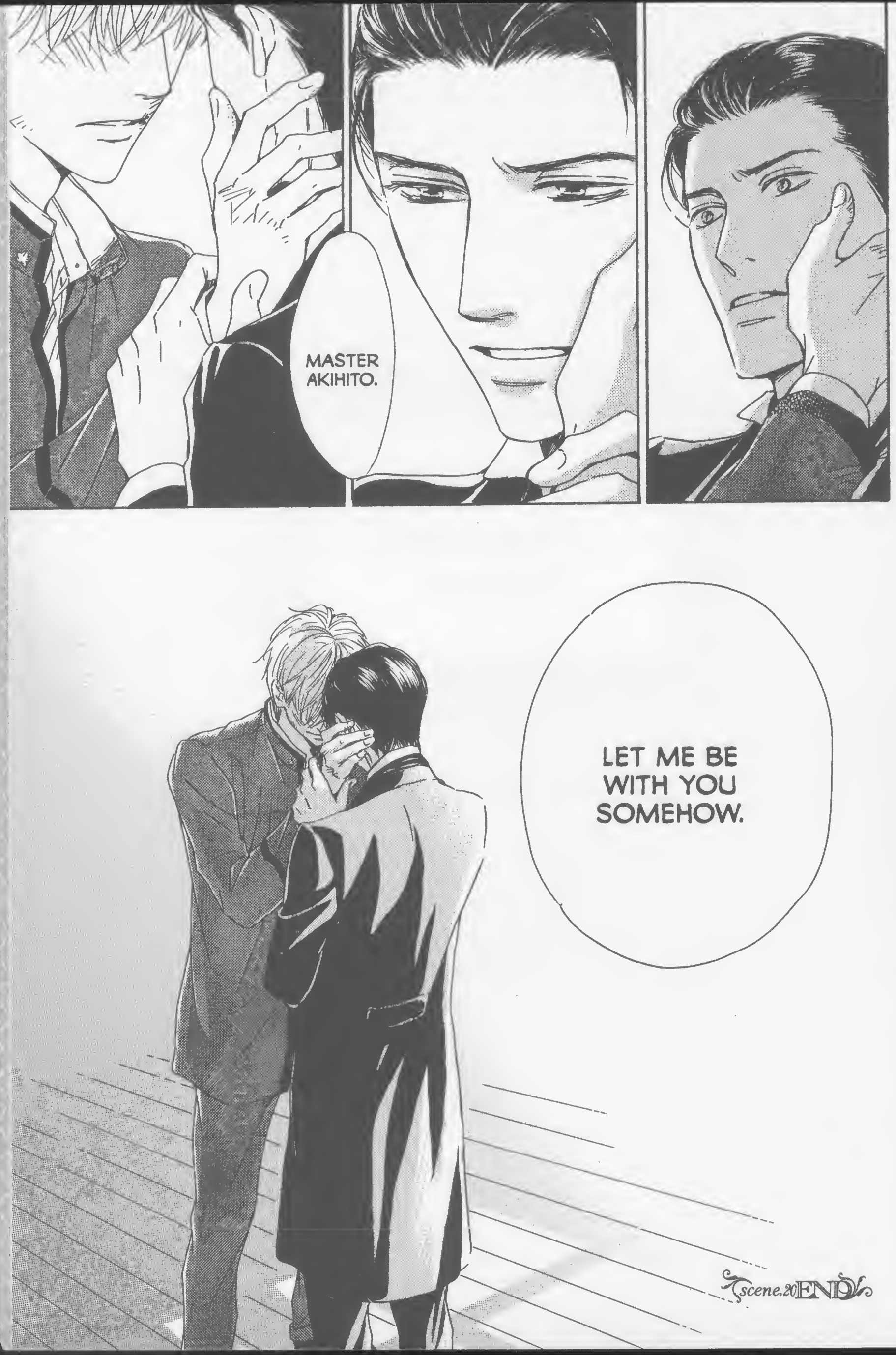

ALSO...
MORE THAN ANYTHING, I...
...
I CAN'T EXPLAIN...
...THIS FEELING VERY WELL, BUT...
...YOU HAVE GOTTEN YOUR PROMOTION... AND THE DEAL YOU MADE WITH ME HAS BEEN FULFILLED.
I BELIEVE THAT I MUST ANSWER TO THAT.


FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE...
...I MUST...
...ANSWER TO YOU.


...
PLEASE ...
...SAY SOMETHING.
PERHAPS ...
...THERE IS SOME OTHER, MORE UNDERSTANDABLE WAY OF SAYING THIS.
BUT I CAN FIND NOTHING OTHER THAN THESE WORDS.


I...
I WANTED HIM...
...TO SAY THOSE WORDS, EVEN IF JUST IN A DREAM.
ALL THIS TIME.
I LOVE YOU.
EVEN IF JUST IN A DREAM.


JUST ONE WORD.
JUST ONE TIME.
AND THEN...
I'D DEFINITELY...
I KNOW...


MASTER AKIHITO.
LET ME BE WITH YOU SOMEHOW.
scene.20 END

> “Volume 4 is out. I hope you enjoy it!”

About the Author

Shoko Hidaka's works have been published in English, French and German. Her previously published English-language releases include *Restart* and *Not Enough Time*. Born on March 31st in Tokyo, she's an Aries with blood type A.